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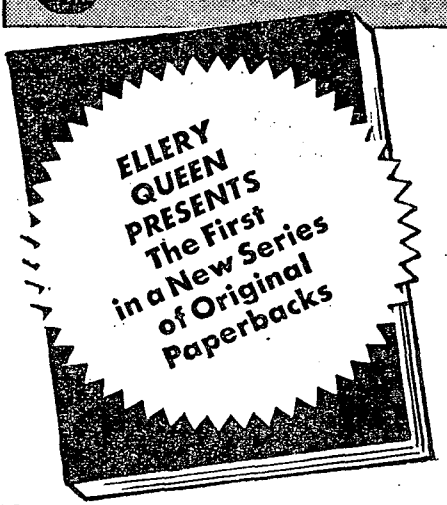

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FIRST PRIZE WINNER NUMBER 10

Stanley Ellin, First Prize Winner of 1954, has been called by many critics—indeed, by most critics and most readers—the best writer of mystery short stories actively producing today. And the simple truth is, Mr. Ellin has never written an undistinguished mystery short story: we should know—all but one have appeared first in *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine.*

And like all his mystery short stories before and since, *The Moment of Decision* is characterized by texture and solidity in style, by substance and creative imagination in plot. For reasons that we will comment on later, this First Prize Winner has an especially powerful, yet subtle, impact, and a provocativeness in those larger meanings which deal with questions that, 14 years after original publication, still have no easy answers ...

THE MOMENT OF DECISION

by STANLEY ELLIN

HUGH LOZIER WAS THE EXCEPTION to the rule that people who are completely sure of themselves cannot be likable. We have all met the sure ones, of course—those controlled but penetrating voices which cut through all others in a discussion, those hard forefingers jabbing home opinions on your chest, those living Final Words on all issues—and I imagine we all share the same amalgam of dislike and envy for them. Dislike, because no one likes to be shouted down or prodded in the chest, and envy, because everyone wishes he himself were so rich in self-assurance that he could do the shouting down and the prodding.

For myself, since my work took me regularly to certain places in this atomic world where the only state was confusion and the only steady employment that of splitting political hairs, I found absolute judgments harder and harder to come by. Hugh once observed of this that it was a good thing my superiors in the Department were not cut of the same cloth, because God knows what would happen to the country

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then. I didn't relish that, but—and there was my curse again—I had to grant him his right to say it.

Despite this, and despite the fact that Hugh was my brother-in-law—a curious relationship when you come to think of it—I liked him immensely, just as everyone else did who knew him. He was a big good-looking man, with clear blue eyes in a ruddy face, and with a quick, outgoing nature eager to appreciate whatever you had to offer. He was overwhelmingly generous, and his generosity was of that rare and excellent kind which makes you feel as if you are doing the donor a favor by accepting it.

I wouldn't say he had any great sense of humor, but plain good-humor can sometimes be an adequate substitute for that, and in Hugh's case it was. His stormy side was largely reserved for those times when he thought you might have needed his help in something, and failed to call on him for it. Which meant that ten minutes after Hugh had met you and liked you, you were expected to ask him for anything he might be able to offer. A month or so after he married my sister Elizabeth she mentioned to him my avid interest in a fine Copley he had hanging in his gallery at Hilltop, and I can still vividly recall my horror when it suddenly arrived, heavily crated and with his gift card attached, at my barren room-and-a-half. It took considerable effort, but I finally managed to return it to him by foregoing the argument that the picture was undoubtedly worth more than the entire building in which I lived and by complaining that it simply didn't show to advantage on my wall. I think he suspected I was lying, but being Hugh he would never dream of charging me with that in so many words.

Of course, Hilltop and the two hundred years of Lozier tradition that went into it did much to shape Hugh this way. The first Loziers had carved the estate from the heights overlooking the river, had worked hard and flourished exceedingly; in successive generations had invested their income so wisely that money and position eventually erected a towering wall between Hilltop and the world outside. Truth to tell, Hugh was very much a man of the Eighteenth Century who somehow found himself in the Twentieth, and simply made the best of it.

Hilltop itself was almost a replica of the celebrated, but long untenanted, Dane house nearby, and was striking enough to open anybody's eyes at a glance. The house was weathered stone, graceful despite its bulk, and the vast lawns reaching to the river's edge were tended with such fanatic devotion over the years that they had become carpets of purest green which magically changed luster under any

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breeze. Gardens ranged from the other side of the house down to the groves which half hid the stables and outbuildings, and past the far side of the groves ran the narrow road which led to town. The road was a courtesy road, each estate holder along it maintaining his share, and I think it safe to say that for all the crushed rock he laid in it Hugh made less use of it by far than any of his neighbors.

Hugh's life was bound up in Hilltop; he could be made to leave it only by dire necessity; and if you did meet him away from it you were made acutely aware that he was counting off the minutes until he could return. And if you weren't wary you would more than likely find yourself going along with him when he did return, and totally unable to tear yourself away from the place while the precious weeks rolled by. I know. I believe I spent more time at Hilltop than at my own apartment after my sister brought Hugh into the family.

At one time I wondered how Elizabeth took to this marriage, considering that before she met Hugh she had been as restless and flighty as she was pretty. When I put the question to her directly, she said, "It's wonderful, darling. Just as wonderful as I knew it would be when I first met him."

It turned out that their first meeting had taken place at an art exhibition, a showing of some ultramodern stuff, and she had been intently studying one of the more bewildering creations on display when she became aware of this tall good-looking man staring at her. And, as she put it, she had been about to set him properly in his place when he said abruptly, "Are you admiring that?"

This was so unlike what she had expected that she was taken completely aback. "I don't know," she said weakly. "Am I supposed to?"

"No," said the stranger, "it's damned nonsense. Come along now, and I'll show you something which isn't a waste of time."

"And," Elizabeth said to me, "I came along like a pup at his heels, while he marched up and down and told me what was good and what was bad, and in a good loud voice, too, so that we collected quite a crowd along the way. Can you picture it, darling?"

"Yes," I said, "I can." By now I had shared similar occasions with Hugh, and learned at first hand that nothing could dent his cast-iron assurance.

"Well," Elizabeth went on, "I must admit that at first I was a little put off, but then I began to see that he knew exactly what he was talking about, and that he was terribly sincere. Not a bit self-conscious about anything, but just eager for me to understand things the way he did. It's the same way with everything. Everybody else in the world is always fumbling and

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bumbling over deciding anything —what to order for dinner, or how to manage his job, or whom to vote for—but Hugh always *knows.* It's *not* knowing that makes for all those nerves and complexes and things you hear about, isn't that so? Well, I'll take Hugh, thank you, and leave everyone else to the psychiatrists."

So there it was. An Eden with flawless lawns and no awful nerves and complexes, and not even the glimmer of a serpent in the offing. That is, not a glimmer until the day Raymond made his entrance on the scene.

We were out on the terrace that day, Hugh and Elizabeth and I, slowly being melted into a sort of liquid torpor by the August sunshine, and all of us too far gone to make even a pretense at talk. I lay there with a linen cap over my face, listening to the summer noises around me and being perfectly happy.

There was the low steady hiss of the breeze through the aspens nearby, the plash and drip of oars on the river below, and now and then the melancholy *tink-tunk* of a sheep bell from one of the flock on the lawn. The flock was a fancy of Hugh's. He swore that nothing was better for a lawn than a few sheep grazing on it, and every summer five or six fat and sleepy ewes were turned out on the grass to serve this purpose and to add a pleasantly pastoral note.

My first warning of something amiss came from the sheep—from the sudden sound of their bells clanging wildly and then a baa-ing which suggested an assault by a whole pack of wolves. I heard Hugh say, "Damn!" loudly and angrily, and I opened my eyes to see something more incongruous than wolves. It was a large black poodle in a full glory of a clownish haircut, a bright red collar, and an ecstasy of high spirits as he chased the frightened sheep around the lawn. It was clear the poodle had no intention of hurting them—he probably found them the most wonderful playmates imaginable—but it was just as clear that the panicky ewes didn't understand this, and would very likely end up in the river before the fun was over.

In the bare second it took me to see all this, Hugh had already leaped the low terrace wall and was among the sheep, herding them away from the water's edge, and shouting commands at the dog which had different ideas.

"Down, boy!" he yelled. "Down!" And then as he would to one of his own hounds he sternly commanded, "Heel!"

He would have done better, I thought, to have picked up a stick or stone and made a threatening gesture, since the poodle paid no attention whatever to Hugh's words. Instead, continuing to bark happily, the poodle made for the

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sheep again, this time with Hugh in futile pursuit. An instant later the dog was frozen into immobility by a voice from among the aspens near the edge of the lawn.

"Asseyez!" the voice called breathlessly. *"Asseyez-vous!"*

Then the man appeared, a small dapper figure trotting across the grass. Hugh stood waiting, his face darkening as we watched.

Elizabeth squeezed my arm. "Let's get down there," she whispered. "Hugh doesn't like being made a fool of."

We got there in time to hear Hugh open his big guns. "Any man," he was saying, "who doesn't know how to train an animal to its place shouldn't own one."

The man's face was all polite attention. It was a good face, thin and intelligent, and webbed with tiny lines at the corners of the eyes. There was also something behind those eyes that couldn't quite be masked. A gentle mockery. A glint of wry perception turned on the world like a camera lens. It was nothing anyone like Hugh would have noticed, but it was there all the same, and I found myself warming to it on the spot.

There was also something tantalizingly familiar about the newcomer's face, his high forehead, and his thinning gray hair, but much as I dug into my memory during Hugh's long and solemn lecture I couldn't come up with an answer. The lecture ended with a few remarks on the best methods of dog training, and by then it was clear that Hugh was working himself into a mood of forgiveness.

"As long as there's no harm done," he said, and paused.

The man nodded soberly. "Still, to get off on the wrong foot with one's new neighbors—"

Hugh looked startled. "Neighbors?" he said almost rudely. "You mean that you live around here?"

The man waved toward the aspens. "On the other side of those woods."

"The *Dane* house?" The Dane house was almost as sacred to Hugh as Hilltop, and he had once explained to me that if he were ever offered a chance to buy the place he would snap it up. His tone now was not so much wounded as incredulous. "I don't believe it!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, yes," the man assured him, "the Dane house. I performed there at a party many years ago, and always hoped that some day I might own it."

It was the word performed which gave me my clue—that and the accent barely perceptible under the precise English. He had been born and raised in Marseilles—that would explain the accent—and long before my time he had already become a legend.

"You're Raymond, aren't you?" I said. "Charles Raymond."

"I prefer Raymond alone." He

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smiled in deprecation of his own small vanity. "And I am flattered that you recognize me."

I don't believe he really was. Raymond the Magician, Raymond the Great, would, if anything, expect to be recognized wherever he went. As the master of sleight of hand who had paled Thurston's star, as the escape artist who had almost outshone Houdini, Raymond would not be inclined to underestimate himself.

He had started with the standard box of tricks which makes up the repertoire of most professional magicians; he had gone far beyond that to those feats of escape which, I suppose, are known to us all by now. The lead casket sealed under a foot of lake ice, the welded-steel strait jackets, the vaults of the Bank of England, the exquisite suicide knot which noosed throat and doubled legs together so that the motion of a leg draws the noose tighter around the throat —all these Raymond had escaped from. And then at the pinnacle of fame he had dropped from sight and his name had become relegated to the past.

When I asked him why, he shrugged.

"A man works for money or for the love of his work. If he has all the wealth he needs and has no more love for his work, why go on?"

"But to give up a great career—" I protested.

"It was enough to know that the house was waiting here."

"You mean," Elizabeth said, "that you never intended to live any place but here?"

"Never—not once in all these years." He laid a finger along his nose and winked broadly at us. "Of course, I made no secret of this to the Dane estate, and when the time came for them to sell I was the first and only one approached."

"You don't give up an idea easily," Hugh said in an edged voice.

Raymond laughed. "Idea? It became an obsession really. Over the years I traveled to many parts of the world, but no matter how fine the place I knew it could not be as fine as that house on the edge of the woods there, with the river at its feet and the hills beyond. Some day, I would tell myself, when my travels are done I will come here, and, like Candide, cultivate my garden."

He ran his hand abstractedly over the poodle's head and looked around with an air of great satisfaction. "And now," he said, "here I am."

Here he was, indeed, and it quickly became clear that his arrival was working a change on Hilltop. Or, since Hilltop was so completely a reflection of Hugh, it was clear that a change was being worked on Hugh. He became irritable and restless, and more ag-

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gressively sure of himself than ever. The warmth and good nature were still there—they were as much part of him as his arrogance—but he now had to work a little harder at them. He reminded me of a man who is bothered by a speck in the eye, but can't find it, and must get along with it as best he can.

Raymond, of course, was the speck, and I got the impression at times that he rather enjoyed the role. It would have been easy enough for him to stay close to his own house and cultivate his garden, or paste up his album, or whatever retired performers do, but he evidently found that impossible. He had a way of drifting over to Hilltop at odd times, just as Hugh was led to find his way to the Dane house and spend long and troublesome sessions there.

Both of them must have known that they were so badly suited to each other that the easy and logical solution would have been to stay apart. But they had the affinity of negative and positive forces, and when they were in a room together the crackling of the antagonistic current between them was so strong you could almost see it in the air.

Any subject became a point of contention for them, and they would duel over it bitterly: Hugh armored and weaponed with his massive assurance, Raymond flicking away with a rapier, trying to find a chink in the armor. I think that what annoyed Raymond most was the discovery that there was no chink in Hugh's armor. As someone with an obvious passion for searching out all sides to all questions, and for going deep into motives and causes, Raymond was continually being outraged by Hugh's single-minded way of laying down the law.

He didn't hesitate to let Hugh know that. "You are positively medieval." he said. "And of all things men should have learned since that time, the biggest is that there are no easy answers, no solutions one can give with a snap of the fingers. I can only hope for you that some day you may be faced with the perfect dilemma, the unanswerable question. You would find that a revelation. You would learn more in that minute than you dreamed possible."

And Hugh did not make matters any better when he coldly answered, "And *I* say that for any man with a brain and the courage to use it there is no such thing as a perfect dilemma."

It may be that this was the sort of episode that led to the trouble that followed, or it may be that Raymond acted out of the most innocent and esthetic motives possible. But, whatever the motives, the results were inevitable and dangerous.

They grew from the project Raymond outlined for us in great de-

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tail one afternoon. Now that he was living in the Dane house he had discovered that it was too big, too overwhelming. "Like a museum," he explained. "I find myself wandering through it like a lost soul through endless galleries."

The grounds also needed landscaping. The ancient trees were handsome but, as Raymond put it, there were just too many of them. "Literally," he said, "I cannot see the river for the trees, and I am one devoted to the sight of running water."

Altogether there would be drastic changes. Two wings of the house would come down, the trees would be cleared away to make a broad aisle to the water, the whole place would be enlivened. It would no longer be a museum, but the perfect home he had envisioned over the years.

At the start of this recitative Hugh was slouched comfortably in his chair. Then as Raymond drew the vivid picture of what was to be, Hugh sat up straighter and straighter until he was as rigid as a trooper in the saddle. His lips compressed. His face became blood-red. His hands clenched and unclenched in a slow deadly rhythm. Only a miracle was restraining him from an open outburst, but it was not the kind of miracle to last. I saw from Elizabeth's expression that she understood this, too, but was as helpless as I to do anything about it. And when Raymond, after painting the last glowing strokes of his description, said complacently, "Well, now, what do you think?" there was no holding Hugh.

He leaned forward with deliberation and said, "Do you really want to know what I think?"

"Now, Hugh," Elizabeth said in alarm. "Please, Hugh—"

He brushed that aside.

"Do you really want to know?"

Raymond frowned. "Of course."

"Then I'll tell you," Hugh said. He took a deep breath. "I think that nobody but a damned iconoclast could even conceive the atrocity you're proposing. I think you're one of those people who takes pleasure in smashing apart anything that's stamped with tradition or stability. You'd kick the props from under the whole world if you could!"

"I beg your pardon," Raymond said. He was very pale and angry. "But I think you are confusing change with destruction. Surely you must comprehend that I do not intend to destroy anything, but only wish to make some necessary changes."

"Necessary?" Hugh gibed. "Rooting up a fine stand of trees that's been there for centuries? Ripping apart a house that's as solid as a rock? *I* call it wanton destruction."

"I'm afraid I do not understand. To refresh a scene, to reshape it—"

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"I have no intention of arguing," Hugh cut in. "I'm telling you straight out that you don't have the right to tamper with that property!"

They were on their feet now, facing each other truculently, and the only thing that kept me from being really frightened was the conviction that Hugh would not become violent, and that Raymond was far too level-headed to lose his temper. Then the threatening moment was magically past. Raymond's lips suddenly quirked in amusement, and he studied Hugh with courteous interest.

"I see," he said. "I was quite stupid not to have understood at once. This property which, I remarked, was a little too much like a museum, is to remain that way, and I am to be its custodian. A caretaker of the past, one might say, a curator of its relics."

He shook his head smilingly. "But I am afraid I am not quite suited to that role. I lift my hat to the past, it is true, but I prefer to court the present. For that reason I will go ahead with my plans, and hope they do not make an obstacle to our friendship."

I remember thinking, when I left next day for the city and a long hot week at my desk, that Raymond had carried off the affair very nicely, and that, thank God, it had gone no further than it did. So I was completely unprepared for Elizabeth's call at the end of the week.

It was awful, she said. It was the business of Hugh and Raymond and the Dane house, but worse than ever. She was counting on my coming down to Hilltop the next day; there couldn't be any question about that. She had planned a way of clearing up the whole thing, but I simply had to be there to back her up. After all, I was one of the few people Hugh would listen to, and she was depending on me.

"Depending on me for what?" I said. I didn't like the sound of it. "And as for Hugh's listening to me, Elizabeth, isn't that stretching it a good deal? I can't see him wanting my advice on his personal affairs."

"If you're going to be touchy about it—"

"I'm *not* touchy about it," I retorted. "I just don't like getting mixed up in this thing. Hugh's quite capable of taking care of himself."

"Maybe too capable."

"And what does that mean?"

"Oh, I can't explain now," she wailed. "I'll tell you everything tomorrow. And, darling, if you have any brotherly feelings you'll be here on the morning train. Believe me, it's serious."

I arrived on the morning train in a bad state. My imagination is one of the overactive kind that can build a cosmic disaster out of very

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little material, and by the time I arrived at the house I was prepared for almost anything.

But, on the surface, at least, all was serene. Hugh greeted me warmly, Elizabeth was her cheerful self, and we had an amiable lunch and a long talk which never came near the subject of Raymond or the Dane house. I said nothing about Elizabeth's phone call, but thought of it with a steadily growing sense of outrage until I was alone with her.

"Now," I said, "I'd like an explanation of all this mystery. The Lord knows what I expected to find out here, but it certainly wasn't anything I've seen so far. And I'd like some accounting for the bad time you've given me since that call."

"All right," she said grimly, "and that's what you'll get. Come along."

She led the way on a long walk through the gardens and past the stables and outbuildings. Near the private road which lay beyond the last grove of trees she suddenly said, "When the car drove you up to the house didn't you notice anything strange about this road?"

"No, I didn't."

"I suppose not. The driveway to the house turns off too far away from here. But now you'll have a chance to see for yourself."

I did see for myself. A chair was set squarely in the middle of the road and on the chair sat a stout man placidly reading a magazine. I recognized the man at once: he was one of Hugh's stable hands, and he had the patient look of someone who has been sitting for a long time and expects to sit a good deal longer. It took me only a second to realize what he was there for, but Elizabeth wasn't leaving anything to my deductive powers. When we walked over to him the man stood up and grinned at us.

"William," Elizabeth said, "would you mind telling my brother what instructions Mr. Lozier gave you?"

"Sure," the man said cheerfully. "Mr. Lozier told us there was always supposed to be one of us sitting right here, and any truck we saw that might be carrying construction stuff or suchlike for the Dane house was to be stopped and turned back. All we had to do is tell them it's private property and they were trespassing. If they laid a finger on us we just call in the police. That's the whole thing."

"Have you turned back any trucks?" Elizabeth asked for my benefit.

The man looked surprised. "Why, you know that, Mrs. Lozier," he said. "There was a couple of them the first day we were out here, and that was all. There wasn't any fuss either," he explained to me. "None of those drivers wants to monkey with trespass."

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When we were away from the road again, I clapped my hand to my forehead. "It's incredible!" I said. "Hugh must know he can't get away with this. That road is the only one to the Dane place, and it's been in public use so long that it isn't private any more!"

Elizabeth nodded. "And that's exactly what Raymond told Hugh a few days back. He came over here in a fury, and they had quite an argument about it. And when Raymond said something about hauling Hugh off to court, Hugh answered that he'd be glad to spend the rest of his life in litigation over this business. But that wasn't the worst of it. The last thing Raymond said was that Hugh ought to know that force only invites force, and ever since then I've been expecting a war to break out here any minute. Don't you see? That man blocking the road is a constant provocation, and it scares me."

I could understand that. And the more I considered the matter, the more dangerous it looked.

"But I have a plan," Elizabeth said eagerly, "and that's why I wanted you here. Im having a dinner party tonight, a very small, informal dinner party. It's to be a sort of peace conference. You'll be there, and Dr. Wynant—Hugh likes you both a great deal—and," she hesitated, "Raymond."

"No!" I said. "You mean he's actually coming?"

"I went over to see him yesterday and we had a long talk. I explained everything to him—about neighbors being able to sit down and come to an understanding, and about brotherly love and—oh, it must have sounded dreadfully inspirational and sticky, but it worked. He said he would be there."

I had a foreboding. "Does Hugh know about this?"

"About the dinner? Yes."

"I mean, about Raymond's being there."

"No, he doesn't." And then when she saw me looking hard at her she burst out defiantly with, "Well, *something* had to be done, and I did it, that's all! Isn't it better than just sitting and waiting for God knows what?"

Until we were all seated around the dining-room table that evening I might have conceded the point. Hugh had been visibly shocked by Raymond's arrival, but then, apart from a sidelong glance at Elizabeth which had volumes written in it, he managed to conceal his feelings well enough. He had made the introductions gracefully, kept up his end of the conversation, and, all in all, did a creditable job of playing host.

Ironically it was the presence of Dr. Wynant which made even this much of a triumph possible for Elizabeth, and which then turned it into disaster. The doctor was an eminent surgeon, stocky and

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gray-haired, with an abrupt, positive way about him. Despite his own position in the world he seemed pleased as a schoolboy to meet Raymond, and in no time at all they were as thick as thieves.

It was when Hugh discovered during dinner that nearly all attention was fixed on Raymond and very little on himself that the mantle of good host started to slip, and the fatal flaws in Elizabeth's plan showed through. There are people who enjoy entertaining lions and who take pleasure in reflected glory, but Hugh was not one of them. Besides, he regarded the doctor as one of his closest friends, and I have noticed that it is the most assured of men who can be the most jealous of their friendships. And when a prized friendship is being encroached on by the man one loathes more than anyone else in the world—! All in all, by simply imagining myself in Hugh's place and looking across the table at Raymond, who was gaily and unconcernedly holding forth, I was prepared for the worst.

The opportunity for it came to Hugh when Raymond was deep in a discussion of the devices used in effecting escapes. They were innumerable, he said. Almost anything one could seize on would serve as such a device. A wire, a scrap of metal, even a bit of paper—at one time or another he had used them all.

"But of them all," he said with a sudden solemnity, "there is only one I would stake my life on. Strange, it is one you cannot see, cannot hold in your hand—in fact, for many people it does not even exist. Yet, it is the one I have used most often and which has never failed me."

The doctor leaned forward, his eyes bright with interest. "And it is—?"

"It is a knowledge of people, my friend. Or, as it may be put, a knowledge of human nature. To me it is as vital an instrument as the scalpel is to you."

"Oh?" said Hugh, and his voice was so sharp that all eyes were instantly turned on him. "You make sleight of hand sound like a department of psychology."

"Perhaps," Raymond said, and I saw he was watching Hugh now, gauging him. "You see there is no great mystery in the matter. My profession—my art, as I like to think of it—is no more than the art of misdirection, and I am but one of its many practitioners."

"I wouldn't say there were many escape artists around nowadays," the doctor remarked.

"True," Raymond said, "but you will observe I referred to the art of misdirection. The escape artist, the master of legerdemain—these are a handful who practise the most exotic form of that art. But what of those who engage in the work of politics, of advertising, of salesmanship?" He laid his finger

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along his nose in the familiar gesture, and winked. "I am afraid they have all made my art their business."

The doctor smiled. "Since you haven't dragged medicine into it I'm willing to go along with you," he said. "But what I want to know is, exactly how does this knowledge of human nature work in your profession?"

"In this way," Raymond said. "One must judge a person carefully. Then, if he finds in that person certain weaknesses, he can state a false premise and it will be accepted without question. Once the false premise is swallowed, the rest is easy. The victim will then see only what the magician wants him to see, or will give his vote to that politician, or will buy merchandise because of that advertising." He shrugged. "And that is all there is to it."

"Is it?" Hugh said. "But what happens when you're with people who have some intelligence and won't swallow your false premise? How do you do your tricks then? Or do you keep them on the same level as selling beads to the savages?"

"Now that's uncalled for, Hugh," the doctor said. "The man's expressing his ideas. No reason to make an issue of them."

"Maybe there is," Hugh said, his eyes fixed on Raymond. "I have found he's full of interesting ideas. I was wondering how far he'd want to go in backing them up."

Raymond touched the napkin to his lips with a precise little flick, and then laid it carefully on the table before him. "In short," he said, addressing himself to Hugh, "you want a small demonstration of my art."

"It depends," Hugh said. "I don't want any trick cigarette cases or rabbits out of hats or any damn nonsense like that. I'd like to see something good."

"Something good," echoed Raymond reflectively. He looked around the room, studied it, and then turned to Hugh, pointing toward the huge oak door which was closed between the dining room and the living room, where we had gathered before dinner.

"That door is not locked, is it?"

"No," Hugh said, "it isn't. It hasn't been locked for years."

"But there is a key to it?"

Hugh pulled out his key chain and with an effort detached a heavy, old-fashioned key. "Yes, it's the same one we use for the butler's pantry." He was becoming interested despite himself.

"Good. No, do not give it to me. Give it to the doctor. You have faith in the doctor's honor, I am sure?"

"Yes," said Hugh drily, "I have."

"Very well. Now, Doctor, will you please go to that door and lock it."

The doctor marched to the door with his firm, decisive tread, thrust

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the key into the lock, and turned it. The click of the bolt snapping into place was loud in the silence of the room. The doctor returned to the table holding the key, but Raymond motioned it away. "It must not leave your hand or everything is lost," he warned.

"Now," Raymond said, "for the finale I approach the door, I flick my handkerchief at it—" the handkerchief barely brushed the keyhole "—and presto, the door is unlocked!"

The doctor went to it. He seized the doorknob, twisted it dubiously, and then watched with genuine astonishment as the door swung silently open.

"Well, I'll be damned," he said.

"Somehow," Elizabeth laughed, "a false premise went down easy as an oyster."

Only Hugh reflected a sense of personal outrage. "All right," he demanded, "how was it done? How did you work it?"

"I?" Raymond said reproachfully, and smiled at all of us with obvious enjoyment. "It was you who did it all. I used only my knowledge of human nature to help you along the way."

I said, "I can guess part of it. That door was set in advance, and when the doctor thought he was locking it, he wasn't. He was really unlocking it. Isn't that the answer?"

Raymond nodded. "Very much the answer. The door *was* locked in advance. I made sure of that, because with a little forethought I suspected there would be such a challenge during the evening, and this was the simplest way of preparing for it. I merely made certain that I was the last one to enter this room, and when I did I used this." He held up his hand so that we could see the sliver of metal in it. "An ordinary skeleton key, of course, but sufficient for an old and primitive lock."

For a moment Raymond looked grave, then he continued brightly, "It was our host himself who stated the false premise when he said the door was unlocked. He was so sure of himself that he would not think to test anything so obvious. The doctor is also a man who is sure, and he fell into the same trap. It is, as you now see, a little dangerous always to be so sure."

"I'll go along with that," the doctor said ruefully, "even though it's heresy to admit it in my line of work." He playfully tossed the key he had been holding across the table to Hugh who let it fall in front of him and made no gesture toward it. "Well, Hugh, like it or not, you must admit the man has proved his point."

"Do I?" said Hugh softly. He sat there smiling a little now, and it was easy to see he was turning some thought over and over in his head.

"Oh, come on, man," the doctor said with some impatience. "You

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were taken in as much as we were. You know that."

"Of course you were, darling," Elizabeth agreed.

I think that she suddenly saw her opportunity to turn the proceedings into the peace conference she had aimed at, but I could have told her she was choosing her time badly. There was a look in Hugh's eye I didn't like—a veiled look which wasn't natural to him. Ordinarily, when he was really angered, he would blow up a violent storm, and once the thunder and lightning had passed he would be honestly apologetic. But this present mood of his was different. There was a slumbrous quality in it which alarmed me.

He hooked one arm over the back of his chair and rested the other on the table, sitting halfway around to fix his eyes on Raymond. "I seem to be a minority of one," he remarked, "but I'm sorry to say I found your little trick disappointing. Not that it wasn't cleverly done—I'll grant that, all right—but because it wasn't any more than you'd expect from a competent blacksmith."

"Now there's a large helping of sour grapes," the doctor jeered.

Hugh shook his head. "No, I'm simply saying that where there's a lock on a door and the key to it in your hand, it's no great trick to open it. Considering our friend's reputation, I thought we'd see more from him than that."

Raymond grimaced. "Since I had hoped to entertain," he said, "I must apologize for disappointing."

"Oh, as far as entertainment goes I have no complaints. But for a real test—"

"A real test?"

"Yes, something a little different. Let's say, a door without any locks or keys to tamper with. A closed door which can be opened with a fingertip, but which is nevertheless impossible to open. How does that sound to you?"

Raymond narrowed his eyes thoughtfully, as if he were considering the picture being presented to him. "It sounds most interesting," he said at last. "Tell me more about it."

"No," Hugh said, and from the sudden eagerness in his voice I felt that this was the exact moment he had been looking for. "I'll do better than that. I'll *show* it to you."

He stood up brusquely and the rest of us followed suit—except Elizabeth, who remained in her seat. When I asked her if she wanted to come along, she only shook her head and sat there watching us hopelessly as we left the room.

We were bound for the cellars, I realized when Hugh picked up a flashlight along the way, but for a part of the cellars I had never seen before. On a few occasions I had gone downstairs to help select a bottle of wine from the racks there, but now we walked past the

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wine vault and into a long, dimly lit chamber behind it. Our feet scraped loudly on the rough stone, the walls around us showed the stains of seepage, and warm as the night was outside, I could feel the chill of dampness turning my chest to gooseflesh.

When the doctor shuddered and said hollowly, "These are the very tombs of Atlantis," I knew I wasn't alone in my feeling, and felt some relief at that.

We stopped at the very end of the chamber, before what I can best describe as a stone closet built from floor to ceiling in the farthest angle of the walls. It was about four feet wide and not quite twice that in length, and its open doorway showed impenetrable blackness inside. Hugh reached into the blackness and pulled a heavy door into place.

"That's it," he said abruptly. "Plain solid wood, four inches thick, fitted flush into the frame so that it's almost airtight. It's a beautiful piece of carpentry, too, the kind they practised two hundred years ago. And no locks or bolts. Just a ring set into each side to use as a handle." He pushed the door gently and it swung open noiselessly at his touch. "See that? The whole thing is balanced so perfectly on the hinges that it moves like a feather."

"But what's it for?" I asked. "It must have been made for a reason."

Hugh laughed shortly. "It was. Back in the bad old days, when a servant committed a crime—and I don't suppose it had to be more of a crime than talking back to one of the ancient Loziers—he was put in here to repent. And since the air inside was good for only a few hours at the most, he either repented damn soon or not at all."

"And that door?" the doctor said cautiously. "That impressive door of yours which opens at a touch to provide all the air needed—what prevented the servant from opening it?"

"Look," Hugh said. He flashed his light inside the cell and we crowded behind him to peer in. The circle of light reached across the cell to its far wall and picked out a short heavy chain hanging a little above head level with a U-shaped collar dangling from its bottom link.

"I see," Raymond said, and they were the first words I had heard him speak since we had left the dining room. "It is truly ingenious. The man stands with his back against the wall, facing the door. The collar is placed around his neck, and then—since it is cleverly not made for a lock—it is clamped there, hammered around his neck. The door is closed, and the man spends the next few hours like someone on an invisible rack, reaching out with his feet to catch the ring on the door which is just out of reach. If he is lucky he

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may not strangle himself in his iron collar, but may live until someone chooses to open the door for him."

"My God," the doctor said. "You make me feel as if I were living through it."

Raymond smiled faintly. "I have lived through many such experiences, and, believe me, the reality is always a little worse than the worst imaginings. There is always the ultimate moment of terror, of panic, when the heart pounds so madly you think it will burst through your ribs, and the cold sweat soaks clear through you in the space of one breath. That is when you must take yourself in hand, must dispel all weakness, and remember all the lessons you have ever learned. If not!"

He whisked the edge of his hand across his lean throat. "Unfortunately for the usual victim of such a device," he concluded sadly, "since he lacks the essential courage and knowledge to help himself, he succumbs."

"But you wouldn't," Hugh said. "I have no reason to think so."

"You mean," and the eagerness was creeping back into Hugh's voice, stronger than ever, "that under the very same conditions as someone chained in there two hundred years ago you could get this door open?"

The challenging note was too strong to be brushed aside lightly. Raymond stood silent for a long minute, face strained with concentration, before he answered.

"Yes," he said. "It would not be easy—the problem is made formidable by its very simplicity—but it could be solved."

"How long do you think it would take you?"

"An hour at the most."

Hugh had come a long way around to get to this point. He asked the question slowly, savoring it. "Would you want to bet on that?"

"Now, wait a minute," the doctor said. "I don't like any part of this."

"And I vote we adjourn for a drink," I put in. "Fun's fun, but we'll all wind up with pneumonia, playing games down here."

Neither Hugh nor Raymond appeared to hear a word of this. They stood staring at each other—Hugh waiting on pins and needles, Raymond deliberating—until Raymond said, "What is this bet you offer?"

"This. If you lose, you get out of the Dane house inside of a month, and sell it to me."

"And if I win?"

It was not easy for Hugh to say it, but he finally got it out. "Then I'll be the one to get out. And if you don't want to buy Hilltop I'll arrange to sell it to the first comer."

For anyone who knew Hugh it was so fantastic, so staggering a statement to hear from him, that

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none of us could find words at first. It was the doctor who recovered most quickly.

"You're not speaking for yourself, Hugh," he warned. "You're a married man. Elizabeth's feelings have to be considered."

"Is it a bet?" Hugh demanded of Raymond. "Do you want to go through with it?"

"I think before I answer that, there is something to be explained." Raymond paused, then went on slowly, "I am afraid I gave the impression—out of false pride, perhaps—that when I retired from my work it was because of a boredom, a lack of interest in it. That was not altogether the truth. In reality, I was required to go to a doctor some years ago, the doctor listened to the heart, and suddenly my heart became the most important thing in the world. I tell you this because while your challenge strikes me as being a most unusual and interesting way of settling differences between neighbors, I must reject it for reasons of health."

"You were healthy enough a minute ago," Hugh said.

"Perhaps not as much as you would want to think, my friend."

"In other words," Hugh said bitterly, "there's no accomplice handy, no keys in your pocket to help out, and no way of tricking anyone into seeing what isn't there! So you have to admit you're beaten."

Raymond stiffened. "I admit no such thing. All the tools I would need even for such a test as this I have with me. Believe me, they would be enough."

Hugh laughed aloud, and the sound of it broke into small echoes all down the corridors behind us. It was that sound, I am sure—the living contempt in it rebounding from wall to wall around us—which sent Raymond into the cell.

Hugh wielded the hammer, a short-handled but heavy sledge, which tightened the collar into a circlet around Raymond's neck, hitting with hard even strokes at the iron which was braced against the wall. When he was finished I saw the pale glow of the radium-painted numbers on a watch as Raymond studied it in his pitch darkness.

"It is now eleven," he said calmly. "The wager is that by midnight this door must be opened, and it does not matter what means are used. Those are the conditions, and you gentlemen are the witnesses to them."

Then the door was closed, and the walking began.

Back and forth we walked—the three of us—as if we were being compelled to trace every possible geometric figure on that stony floor. The doctor with his quick impatient step, and I matching Hugh's long nervous strides. A foolish, meaningless march, back and forth across our own shadows,

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each of us marking the time by counting off the passing seconds, and each ashamed to be the first to look at his watch.

For a while there was a counterpoint to this scraping of feet from inside the cell. It was a barely perceptible clinking of chain coming at brief, regular intervals. Then there would be a long silence, followed by a renewal of the sound. When it stopped again, I could not restrain myself any longer. I held up my watch toward the dim yellowish light of the bulb overhead and saw with dismay that barely twenty minutes had passed.

After that there was no hesitancy in the others about looking at the time, and, if anything, this made it harder to bear than just wondering. I caught the doctor winding his watch with small brisk turns, and then a few minutes later try to wind it again, and suddenly drop his hand with disgust as he realized he had already done it. Hugh walked with his watch held up near his eyes, as if by concentration on it he could drag that crawling minute hand faster around the dial.

Thirty minutes had passed.

Forty.

Forty-five.

I remember that when I looked at my watch and saw there were less than fifteen minutes to go I wondered if I could last out even that short time. The chill had sunk so deep into me that I ached with it. I was shocked when I saw that Hugh's face was dripping with sweat, and that beads of it gathered while I watched.

It was while I was looking at him in fascination that it happened. The sound broke through the walls of the cell like a wail of agony heard from far away, and shivered over us as if it were spelling out the words.

"Doctor!" it cried. *"The air!"*

It was Raymond's voice, but the thickness of the wall blocking it off turned it into a high thin sound. What was clearest in it was the note of pure terror, the plea growing out of that terror.

"Air!" it screamed, the word bubbling and dissolving into a long-drawn sound which made no sense at all.

And then it was silent.

We leaped for the door together, but Hugh was there first, his back against it, barring the way. In his upraised hand was the hammer which had clinched Raymond's collar.

"Keep back!" he cried. "Don't come any nearer, I warn you!"

The fury in him, brought home by the menace of the weapon, stopped us in our tracks.

"Hugh," the doctor pleaded, "I know what you're thinking, but you can forget that now. The bet's off, and I'm opening the door on my own responsibility. You have my word for that."

"Do I? But do you remember

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the terms of the bet, Doctor? This door must be opened within an hour—*and it doesn't matter what means are used!* Do you understand now? He's fooling both of you. He's faking a death scene so that you'll push open the door and win his bet for him. But it's my bet, not yours, and I have the last word on it!"

I saw from the way he talked, despite the shaking tension in his voice, that he was in perfect command of himself, and it made everything seem that much worse.

"How do you know he's faking?" I demanded. "The man said he had a heart condition. He said there was always a time in a spot like this when he had to fight panic and could feel the strain of it. What right do you have to gamble with his life?"

"Damn it, don't you see he never mentioned any heart condition until he smelled a bet in the wind? Don't you see he set his trap that way, just as he locked the door behind him when he came to dinner! But this time nobody will spring it for him—nobody!"

"Listen to me," the doctor said, and his voice cracked like a whip. "Do you concede that there's one slim possibility of that man being dead in there, or dying?"

"Yes, it is possible—anything is possible."

"I'm not trying to split hairs with you! I'm telling you that if that man is in trouble every second counts, and you're stealing that time from him. And if that's the case, by God, I'll sit in the witness chair at your trial and swear you murdered him! Is that what you want?"

Hugh's head sank forward on his chest, but his hand still tightly gripped the hammer. I could hear the breath drawing heavily in his throat, and when he raised his head, his face was gray and haggard. The torment of indecision was written in every pale sweating line of it.

And then I suddenly understood what Raymond had meant that day when he told Hugh about the revelation he might find in the face of a perfect dilemma. It was the revelation of what a man may learn about himself when he is forced to look into his own depths, and Hugh had found it at last.

In that shadowy cellar, while the relentless seconds thundered louder and louder in our ears, we waited to see what he would do.

EDITORIAL NOTE: Now that you have finished Mr. Ellin's story, you realize that it belongs in the great tradition of "challenge" tales—in the literary stream of Mark Twain's *Awful, Terrible Medieval*

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Romance (1871), Frank R. Stockton's *The Lady, or the Tiger?* (1884), and W. W. Jacobs' *The Lost Ship* (1898). You also realize that Mr. Ellin's story does not merely recreate a riddle of the past, or simply offer a new variation. Actually, it is an *extension* of the great tradition—a 1954 version which, 15 years later, stills reveals the most serious dilemma of our time.

Mr. Ellin's story calls for more than the usual "reader participation." Entirely apart from the question of whether Raymond did or did not have a heart condition, we are left with this speculation: What did Hugh decide to do? To win his bet—at any cost, possibly of his very soul? Or to lose the bet—and thus become a man of heart and conscience as well as of brain?

In the sense of posing a problem and giving no solution in the story itself, Mr. Ellin follows in the footsteps of Mark Twain and Frank R. Stockton. But *The Moment of Decision* is not a pure riddle like *Awful, Terrible Medieval Romance* or *The Lady, or the Tiger?* Those earlier classics presented the reader with unanswerable questions: Mr. Ellin's riddle *is* answerable. Readers have but to look into their own hearts: for it is really your dilemma too—the dilemma of people everywhere—the dilemma of nations, even of civilizations, in this new atomic, men-walking-on-the-moon age . . .

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REASONABLE
FACSIMILE
OF A
POESQUE
PROBLEM

If Monsieur G——, the Prefect of the Parisian police, and Dupin's sometimes fatuous foil, deliberately set himself the task of giving the great Chevalier the most difficult ratiocinative problem conceivable, truly the most taxing deductive and inspirational challenge, it would be the case of the court-martial of Colonel Feydeau, suspected, accused, arrested, charged, tried, and convicted of treason of which he was entirely innocent. (We could use a Dupin today in every major government in the world!)

THE CLEW OF THE SINGLE WORD

by MICHAEL HARRISON

another "hitherto unpublished" tale of C. Auguste Dupin

THE WIND WAS MOANING AND SHRIEKING AMONG THE CHIMNEYPOTS AS WE heard G——'s carriage enter our courtyard. It was a wild, gusty night in November, 18— that G—— had answered Dupin's summons to our old mansion, No. 33, Rue Dunôt, Faubourg St. Germain. All was warm and snug, however, in our little back library or book-closet, *au troisième*, and G—— expressed his pleasure at seeing the glowing fire to which he rushed with extended hands.

"It is true," said the Prefect of the Parisian police, when he had accepted the cup of hot spiced wine that Hyacinthe, our domestic, had brought to him before retiring from the room; "it is true that the evidence upon which Colonel Feydeau was convicted by court-martial was of the kind called 'circumstantial'; but we need not reject it because of that. Simply put, gentlemen, the Colonel was found Guilty in the proven absence of any other possible suspect."

"But there was no motive," Dupin remarked.

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"I would not say that there was *no* motive, even though it was never actually brought out in the evidence laid before the court-martial. But, all the same, there is strong presumption that Colonel Feydeau is disaffected toward the present King. The warmth with which he refused to accept the Cross of July from his present Majesty nearly cost the Colonel a forced resignation; and the words he is said to have used when it was proposed to congratulate the King on his escape from Fieschi's infernal machine led to a duel with General——, who has found it very profitable to support the new *régime*. No, if there has not been positive evidence of treachery, there has been strong evidence of disaffection."

"In that case," said Dupin dryly, "it is most mysterious that Colonel Feydeau should have been the officer chosen to act as confidential Military Secretary at the meeting he is supposed to have betrayed. Why was Colonel Feydeau chosen? The two Marshals of France who met to discuss our country's future must have been satisfied that Colonel Feydeau would not betray his trust?"

G——, in an odiously vulgar gesture, laid a thick finger alongside his nose. To this vulgarity he added a wink.

"Marshal B—— and Marshal H—— are not notorious for their liking of The Citizen King."

"Bah!" said Dupin impatiently. "That's merely begging the question! Whether or not they like King Louis Philippe, the two Marshals must enjoy the confidence of the present *régime*. Ergo, they would not have appointed a Military Secretary of whose attachment to the present King there could be the slightest possible doubt. Whatever the outcome of this secret meeting at the *École Militaire*, it is clear that it was begun under no cloud of suspicion. If the two Marshals trusted each other—and were trusted by the Government—then all three must have reposed implicit confidence in the honesty and honor of the Colonel. So much is clear. Why, then, did suspicion fall *afterward* upon the Colonel? I take it there is positive evidence that the secrets of that secret meeting were betrayed, that there is no possible chance the Colonel is falsely accused?"

"We have positive evidence that most of what Marshal B—— and Marshal H—— discussed was conveyed, within two days, to the Military Attaché of Prussia, whose King may be accepted as the European monarch most interested in the matters deliberated by the two Marshals of France. Yes, Dupin, I assure you there *was* a betrayal. Now you will ask me why we are so certain that Colonel Feydeau was the traitor? The explanation is simple: no one else had either the means to acquire the information or the opportunity to disclose it to a Foreign Power."

"And the motive?" Dupin murmured, puffing away at his pipe, and re-

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garding our visitor steadily through the drifts of fragrant smoke. "And the motive, my dear Prefect, which led this man of apparently indubitable military honor to commit the worst crime in a soldier's code?"

G—— threw up his hands in a gesture most characteristic of him.

"Who can say? That is the most mysterious part of the affair."

"You mean that you have failed to uncover a plausible motive? But this is scandalous, my dear G——! The establishment of motive should have been the first consideration."

"In the absence of a proven motive the prosecution was entitled to accept circumstantial evidence of the most convincing nature. That is good law, my esteemed Chevalier."

"True, but to proceed to such a charge without a motive! The Colonel is not in debt? He does not frequent card-parties? He keeps no expensive mistress or—perhaps even more costly—a string of English thoroughbred horses? No? Very well, we shall return later to the question of motive. Pray be good enough now to explain to me the irrefutable proof upon which the Colonel was charged and condemned?"

I have said that the night was a gusty one. As we had been talking, the wind had risen and was now blowing, as the sailor says, half-a-gale. The wind moaned about the ancient roof of our mansion; but above the moaning of the tempest came a higher sound—something between the sharp stridulation of a piccolo and the deep organ-note of a bass viol.

I had observed that G——'s attention had been caught by this singular noise, and that it had been filling him with increasing nervousness and irritation. At the best of times not a patient man, G—— could bear the vexation of this inexplicable sound no longer. Cutting with deliberate boorishness across the even flow of Dupin's patient questioning, the Prefect of the Parisian police held up a hand with the same peremptory gesture as that with which an *agent-de-ville* arrests the traffic in the boulevards.

"Dupin! Do I require the attentions of the aural surgeon—or is that some excessively singular noise I hear over and above the din of the storm? It sounds as though all the hobgoblins of legend are wailing on your rooftop!"

My friend smiled.

"What you hear is indeed a singular sound. But reassure yourself, my dear Prefect: you do not need the attentions of a surgeon. Nor, for that matter, of a necromancer. There *is* a sound. It comes from the direction of the rooftop. Demons are not making it—wire stays supporting the ruinous old chimney are responsible. It was necessary to brace the brickwork, and when the wind blows, the wires hum."

"Hum? They shriek. And—forgive my odd fancy, Dupin—but one could almost imagine that these wires of yours are *speaking*. There is—

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hark now!—something almost articulate in the sounds which emanate from those vibrating wires."

We listened; and indeed it was as though we could distinguish words here and there. I remarked that, perhaps, man might learn in truth to talk along wires one of these days.

"Small boys certainly can," said the Prefect, "when they send paper disks aloft on the strings of their kites—so long, that is, as the strings are kept taut. Dupin, could you not slacken off your wires? They might not then hum so much in the wind."

"They are not as tight as they might be. They are purposely left slack. If one tightened them more, the noise would be insufferable, and the strain on the old chimney would bring the bricks tumbling down."

Monsieur G. sighed and then proceeded to recount the facts on which the Colonel had been condemned to death.

"For some years past, in the interests of the Government, the secrecy of such meetings as that between the two Marshals had been safeguarded by changing the *rendezvous* for each meeting. Sometimes the meeting would be held in a room in the Ministry of War, at another time in a room in the Ministry of the Marine; sometimes in the Prefecture of Police; sometimes in the *Ecole Militaire*."

"There is no regularity from one *rendezvous* to another?" Dupin asked.

"None. To remove all possibility of a pattern establishing itself, the place of the meeting is drawn by lot. The various names of the *rendezvous* are written on slips of paper, the slips placed in a hat, and a slip is withdrawn."

"A slip might be palmed?"

"I have often made the draw myself. If not I, then someone of equal trustworthiness. Sometimes, to make certain there has been no substitution, I have ordered a second draw, using a different person to make it. You ask me if it would be possible to dig a tunnel to within hearing distance of the room? Well—which room? Even the participants in the meeting do not know until their carriages have drawn up where they are meeting; and as for us, we draw the name of the *rendezvous* only a few minutes before giving directions to the participants' coachmen. But let me explain to you the precautions taken to insure that the meetings are held in complete secrecy."

Imagine (G——went on) a rectangle whose four sides we shall denominate, for easier comprehension, North, South, East, and West. Now this rectangle represents a large room, thirty *mètres* in width—that is, between the West and East boundaries—and ten *mètres* in depth—that is, from North to South. We have then, in English measures, a big room about one hundred feet wide by about thirty feet deep.

In the centre of the West wall and in the centre of the East wall there are

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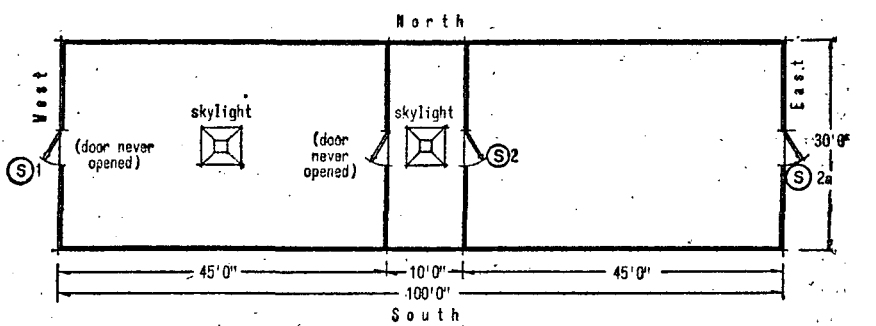
heavy doors. There are no windows in any walls, but illumination comes from small barred skylights through which not even a dwarf could make his way. To prevent eavesdropping, the skylights are glazed with ground glass, through which it is impossible to see, though, of course, as the glass is translucent, the light of day may penetrate.

Now (G—— continued) imagine that, at a distance of forty-five feet from the West wall and at a distance of forty-five feet from the East wall, the room had been divided by two walls parallel with the outer West and East walls into three compartments: two compartments, to West and East, measuring forty-five feet across by thirty feet deep; and one smaller compartment between these two larger compartments—this much smaller room being only ten feet in width by thirty feet in depth.

In the West and East walls of this smaller compartment two doors had been cut and so placed that, if one were to draw a line connecting the West and East doors of the original room, this line would pass through the doors of the smaller compartment.

"But," said G——, "perhaps a rough sketch will make the matter clearer." He drew his memorandum-book from his tail-pocket, and with a pencil rapidly completed this plan:



"The position of the central, smaller room, entered by two doors—one to the West, the other to the East—is now evident," G—— commented.

"Just so," said Dupin, picking up the sketch and subjecting it to intense scrutiny. "And, save for the skylight you have indicated, there is no other entrance to the conference chamber?"

"None."

"No trap-door in the floor? No hatch in a wall through which food and other things might be passed? Nothing? Just so! And, doubtless, the same applies to the two larger rooms which flank and guard the central chamber?

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Now, I observe that you have marked the letter S, ringed, on the sketch. This, I take it, signifies the position of the soldier-guards. Were there more than one?"

"Yes. Two. Be so good as to turn again to my poor chart. In the West wall of the central chamber there is a door; in the West wall of the outer room—I mean the room to the left of the central room—there is also a door. Both these doors were closed and double-locked. Outside the door in the wall of the outer room sat a soldier whom I have indicated as S1."

"*Sat?*"

"Yes, *sat*. In a chair. Why, Dupin, what is so extraordinary about that?"

"That soldiers sit and not stand is sufficiently extraordinary. Besides, one of the two Marshals of France whom they were guarding has the reputation of being something of a martinet."

"Let me explain. There is no relaxing of discipline implied in the fact that the two soldiers sat, rather than stood at attention. Both are picked men—this special guard is one that they have been mounting for years."

"Indeed!"

"Indeed. Once the *bona-fide* character of a guard is established it would be most imprudent to change."

"Hem!" said Dupin.

"You do not agree? Well, let us discuss that later. To return to the system of guarding the conference, the soldier to the West sits outside two locked doors—locked doors which are never opened."

"Never?"

"Never. Entrance to the conference room is only through the two doors to the East."

"You forgot to explain why the guards sit rather than stand?"

"Ah, so I did! They sit because they have no relief guards. As they may have to wait outside the conference chamber for many hours, it would be an intolerable hardship if they were asked to stand beyond the regulation Army watch of two hours. If they became too fatigued, their attention might be dulled."

"In a comfortable chair their attention, I should venture, might become dulled even sooner. Or perhaps the chairs are not comfortable?"

"If they were supplied to the order of Marshal H——I should hazard a guess that they are far from comfortable. But that, my dear Chevalier, is why the guards sit, and do not stand. Now let me explain to you the precise routine which is followed at each conference."

"Always the same routine?"

"Always. No variation in the rules laid down some years ago is permitted. Though the *venue* of the meetings may change, the guard-mounting never

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varies. Even the plan of the room-within-a-room is scrupulously followed."

"Followed, in the case of each *venue*, to the point that the dimensions of the rooms are always the same?"

"To the last *centimètre*. This, of course, facilitates the work of the guards. They know exactly what to do, exactly where to take up their positions."

"I am convinced of it," said Dupin, with a dry intonation which, to both G—— and to myself, betokened a private sense of merriment.

Monsieur G. frowned.

"Dupin, I do believe that you find something amusing in all this! Let me remind you that the honor and life of a French officer is at stake!"

"You do not need to remind me of the gravity of the situation. But, on the other hand, I cannot fail to be amused when *naïveté* puffs itself up to a mere pompous imitation of responsibility."

"What on earth do you mean, Dupin? I—"

"No matter. I see that you have marked S1, S2, and S2a on your sketch. Would you, pray, explain?"

"Gladly. S1 and S2 are, of course, the soldier-guards—Jean-Baptiste Vourc'h and Michel Nettier, respectively. As the doors on the West are never opened, Corporal Vourc'h takes up his seat outside the outer wall, and there remains until ordered to quit his post."

"By whom?"

"By Colonel Feydeau—or whoever is acting as Military Secretary for the conference."

"Colonel Feydeau does not always act as Military Secretary, then?"

"No. Usually the senior member of the conference—there are not always only two—names his choice, and the officer in question is seconded to the conference for its duration. Well, the Military Secretary posts the man to the West—in this last case, it was Corporal Vourc'h—and then, through the outer door to the East, enters the inner room, the members of the conference preceding him.

"The other guard—in this case, Sergeant Nettier—then locks the inner door and for a few minutes takes up the position I have marked S2. Inside the central chamber, the Military Secretary examines the room, paying particular attention to the fact that both doors are locked and that the skylight is firmly closed. As soon as he is satisfied that the security is perfect, he raps on the East door of the inner room and orders the guard—in this case, Nettier—to leave the outer room, lock the outer door, and take up his position on a chair at the point that I have marked S2a on my sketch.

"Here Sergeant Nettier remained until a signal from Colonel Feydeau announced that the conference was over. The Sergeant then unlocked and opened the outer door, and entered the Eastern outer chamber; he then un-

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locked and opened the Eastern inner door, and stood aside to let the two Marshals and Colonel Feydeau out. That is how the routine goes in every case."

Though "Lights Out" had sounded before we arrived at the *Ecole Militaire,* the Orderly Officer for the Night willingly complied with Dupin's request that the clerks on duty when Sergeant Nettier had sat on guard be roused and brought down.

As this was being done, Dupin examined the room that had been set apart for the conference, as well as the flanking rooms, and appeared to pay excessive attention to the hooks from which the bell-cord hung. However, after the most *minute* examination of the Sergeant's bell-ringing device, Dupin looked at us with a smile upon his lips, and something of rueful self-reproach in his expression.

"I confess that, as Monsieur le Préfet complained of the noise of the wind in the wire braces of our old chimny-pot, and further remarked that small boys can send messages aloft on the strings of their kites, I suspected that the Sergeant had contrived that the wire linking this outer door with the inner door—the door of the room in which the two Marshals were discussing the foreign policy of our country—could be so tightened that the vibrations of the Marshals' voices would be carried along to him as he sat silently at his post outside the outer door."

"How do you know that he was silent?" G—— asked.

"I doubt very much that the Sergeant permitted himself—or was permitted—to speak. But we may soon verify my supposition that he was silent. Ah, here come the clerks. You, Monsieur, were on duty as a clerk when this room was being guarded. I believe the non-commissioned officer on guard sat in a chair?"

"Yes, sir, he did. I understand it is usual in such cases."

"Just so. You observed the Sergeant as he sat on guard?"

"Conformably with my duties, sir," said the clerk. "I cannot say that I observed him with any particular attention."

"Of course not. As you say, you had your duties to attend to. But you probably saw what he did? How he passed the tedious hours of waiting? Did he engage you or one of your fellows in conversation?"

"No, sir. From the moment he closed and looked the door until the ringing of a small bell caused him to unlock that same door, he spoke not one word."

"Most commendable! Did you not address a word to him?"

"No, sir. We were on duty. Talking is not permitted. In our ten-minute recesses, we go outside or into the recreation room."

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"I see. The Sergeant did not talk. Presumably he did not sleep. What, then *did* he do? Did he read?"

"No, sir," said the clerk, "he wrote. A table had been provided for him, at his request, and he had ink and paper. He appeared to be writing all the time, save when he broke off for a few moments to drink the coffee that an orderly brought to him."

"Did you, or one of your companions, venture to ask the Sergeant what he was writing? No matter!—I see that you are properly scandalized at the mere suggestion. I must bear in mind that I find myself in a *milieu* strictly military, where one does not ask questions. Yet you *did* observe the Sergeant from time to time?—the exigencies of your labors," Dupin asked, not without a tinge of irony, "permitted you to do that? Very well."

Then, turning to the Orderly Officer, Dupin requested that he be permitted to continue the examination of the military clerk alone—that all, except the Orderly Officer, be sent back to their beds. This being done, Dupin continued his questioning.

"I desire you now," he said, "to describe to us *exactly* what happened when the conference came to an end. Please try to recall every detail, no matter how trivial it may seem to you."

"Well, sir," said the man, after a glance from his superior officer had given him permission to speak, "the bell tinkled, Sergeant Nettier rose from his chair, lifted the writing-table out of the way, and unlocked the outer door, leaving it ajar. Then we saw him walk from the outer door to the inner door and unlock that. He opened it wide, stood well to one side, and after a few moments Messieurs les Maréchaux, followed by Monsieur le Colonel Feydeau, came through the inner door and then passed through *this* door. We, of course, sir, all stood at attention, and Monsieur de Barrère here"—the clerk glanced at his Orderly Officer—"saluted. The senior of the two Marshals acknowledged the salute, and the two other officers bowed."

"Then?"

"Then? Well, sir, the three officers—the Marshals leading, and Monsieur Feydeau following close behind—continued on through that door—over there."

"Which leads—?"

"To the Officers' Mess, sir."

Dupin rubbed his chin, staring hard at the clerk, who appeared to be somewhat discomposed under the intense scrutiny of my friend.

"And Sergeant Nettier? Did he join the distinguished party?"

"Oh, no, sir. He went back to lock the inner door, then he locked the outer door, and then he followed the party after they had passed through that door there, on their way, I suppose, to the Officers' Mess."

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"Yes. Now pay the strictest attention to what I ask. You saw Sergeant Nettier go *into* the inner room—?"

"Oh, no, sir! He did not go *in*. He merely closed the inner door and locked it. I could see him clearly from where I was still standing at attention by my desk."

"So! Very well then: another question. As the two Marshals came out, was anything said? I mean: did anyoné speak? You seem to be in some doubt. *Did* someone speak? *Was* anything said? Were the two Marshals in conversation?"

"No, sir."

"Good. We progress. You saw the faces of these officers clearly? Yes? Well then: was any emotion visible on any face? Joy? Mortification? Stern resolve? You take my meaning?"

"To be sure, sir. But—no. I cannot say that I detected any emotion. These gentlemen, sir, preserve correct military reticence when in public."

"One might argue," said Dupin, somewhat nettled at the implied rebuke, "that these gentlemen were *not* in public. However, you could detect no emotion on any face?

"Now, this is of vital importance. Was *nothing* said as the party came through this outer door? Ah, you begin to recollect! Something *was* said, eh? By whom? And *what?*"

The clerk frowned, and then his face cleared as memory returned.

"I had almost forgotten. It was just a remark. But, yes, as the gentlemen came through the door and the senior Marshal looked up to return the salute, I saw him staring, as though he had seen a ghost, at something behind me. Perhaps, monsieur, you would ask the Orderly Officer if he, too, noticed it?"

Yes, said the Orderly Officer, he had caught this strange look on the Marshal's face, and it had astonished him.

"What was the cause?" Dupin asked.

The clerk was silent.

"You could not have seen what was behind you," said the Orderly Officer, "since you were standing at attention."

Dupin said gently, "There are grave matters of state involved here. It so happened that this clerk was standing—strictly at attention of course—but in such a way that he did *just* manage to see what had astonished the Marshal. You may tell us what it was."

With a dubious glance at the Orderly Officer the clerk muttered, "The door had opened there, and I saw the Marshal staring at one of the corporal-cooks. He was stripped to his waist, but wore his tall linen cap and was brandishing a large ladle. He was so amazed at seeing the Marshal that

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he stood there gaping, and I saw the Marshal turn his eyes upward, and heard him say something to the other Marshal before they passed out of this room."

"What did you hear the Marshal say?"

"I cannot be quite sure, but—"

"You can—and will—be quite sure!" said Dupin sternly. "Rack your memory and recall *exactly* what was said! Come, you may take your time, but it is of crucial importance that you recall what was said."

"I crave your indulgence, sir," said the clerk, "but I caught only one word. I thought I heard the Marshal say 'sublime'."

"And the sentence of which that word formed a part? Can you remember any thing more?"

"Well, sir, seeing that the Marshal was obviously commenting upon the ludicrous apparition of the half-naked cook, wielding a ladle, and looking like some apprentice of Satan, I assume the Marshal may have remarked to the other Marshal: 'From the sublime to the ridiculous, eh?' Does not that seem possible to you, sir?"

"Bravo!" said Dupin, rubbing his hands with immense satisfaction. "Yes, it does seem possible to me. Now, you say that you caught only the word 'sublime' because the Marshal spoke somewhat under his breath, since he was also gravely returning the salute of this Orderly Room. Could Sergeant Nettier have heard more? Was he nearer than you? Of course he saw, but do you think he heard all that the Marshal said? Perhaps the word 'sublime' rather stood out—pronounced a little more loudly, eh?"

"Perhaps, sir. I only know that I heard but the one word—'sublime.'"

We returned to our mansion in the Prefect's carriage by a leisurely route which took us along the Petite Rue des Acacias, through the Place Breteuil, and so along the Rue de Vaugirard to No. 33, Rue Dunôt, Faubourg St. Germain.

Dupin refused the importunities of the Prefect to explain—though he had permitted himself to tell the Prefect to order Sergeant Nettier's arrest.

"I shall explain all," said Dupin, "as soon as we are comfortably ensconced in our little book-closet, *au troisième*."

In a short time we were sitting around the fire, with the meerschaum and two cigars pouring their foggy fragrance into the air and mixing it with the steam rising from three glasses of hot brandy grog. Whereupon Dupin began his promised explanation.

"First of all," he said, "you are correct, Monsieur le Préfet, when you say nothing can be heard from the inner room by any one outside the

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outer door. My theory that the bell-pull was a listening device proved untenable. It was simply a bell-pull, and nothing more. No notes were passed. Sergeant Nettier could not hear what was said. He could not even learn, from the blank expression on the Marshals' faces, or on that of Colonel Feydeau, to what conclusion the conference had come. Yet *I* know what decision was made."

"Good gracious, Dupin! What are you telling me?"

"The decision taken by the Marshals was this: should Prussia intervene in Spain, France would invoke her secret understanding with Turkey and supply the Turks with arms and men to move up from Bosnia and Herzegovina into the Austrian territories, causing Prussia to go to the aid of Austria-Hungary which would, of course, be instantly under attack from the Italian rebels. This would leave Prussia with the alternatives of abandoning the Spanish adventure or of gravely extending her commitments over more than a thousand miles of territory, almost all of it hostile to King William."

"Merciful heavens, Dupin! How on earth did you learn this? Who, in the name of all that is holy, gave you this information?"

"The Prussian Government," said Dupin coolly, "through their Military Attaché in Paris."

"But, Dupin!" said G——, starting up, his face black with suspicion.

"Be seated! I am no traitor. But if the Prussian had *not* given us correct information, Colonel Feydeau would *not* have been arrested. Eh? Ergo, the information from Prussia *was* correct? Agreed? Yes. Well, now, the information came in the first place from Sergeant Nettier, and not to him from Colonel Feydeau, either. Sit down, G——: the solution is simple. Nettier heard no more than the clerk did—that one word, 'sublime.' He passed it on to his Prussian paymasters, as he had been instructed and well paid to do. It was not much, to be sure—just that one word, 'sublime.'

"But in all truth it enabled the *experts* of the Prussian Foreign Office to do precisely what I have done—to reveal the decisions on political and military action to be taken by France in the event of Prussia's intervening in Spain. The fact that you arrested, charged, tried, and convicted the Colonel proves that both the Prussians and your humble servant deduced correctly. *There was no information from the conference or from any individual member.* All that Nettier had to report was that Marshal H—— had mentioned the single word 'sublime.'"

"And what on earth did that tell the Prussians?"

"It told them that France intended to call on *Turkey*. What is the other, the official, name for Turkey, Monsieur G.?"

"Gracious heavens! Dupin, I should never have associated the word—"

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"Nor did the clerk, which makes him innocent of any complicity. He would not have mentioned the word otherwise. But you do see now: Turkey, known as the Ottoman Empire—otherwise, and officially, known as *The Sublime Porte*. That little word unloosed a torrent of shrewd and accurate speculation on Prussia's part.

"But, Monsieur le Préfet," said Dupin coldly, "pray refrain from saying what is springing to your lips—that 'it was all a silly blunder, and really no mystery at all.' That the tragedy we have just avoided came about through a trivial accident, I agree. But would you have seen, in the single word recalled by the clerk, the means of tracking down a spy and of restoring the honor of a French officer, while saving him from a shameful death?"

G—— does not often pay compliments; rarely indeed does he pay one to Dupin. But this time his generosity, such as it is, overcame his natural prudence in the matter of acknowledging my friend's superiority in ratiocination.

"Congratulations, my dear Chevalier," he said with a smile, raising his glass in a toast. "Your performance merits only one word—*sublime!*"

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Professor Ponsonby grows in stature with each new story, and here is the most fascinating mystery the professor has yet faced. And what a challenge to his perception, knowledge, and ingenuity!

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We warn you: once you start you won't put this story down . . .

PONSONBY AND THE SHAKESPEARE SONNET

by ALAN K. YOUNG

HE WOULD HAVE KNOWN HER ANYWHERE, AS SHE ENTERED HIS STUDY, ushered in by his housekeeper, Professor Ponsonby recognized the same half-questioning, half-hopeful smile that had greeted him so often in the lobby of her apartment house long years ago; for the first time in half a century he gave her the assurance she needed—yes, he *was* glad to see her—by returning her smile and holding out his arms to her as she came across the room.

He took her hands in his. "Lucille."

"Amos."

"You haven't changed."

"I was just going to say the same thing about you."

"Which would have made both of us liars."

They laughed, and he saw her seated in the place of honor across the hearth from his own favorite armchair. Her tailored blue suit was severely plain, her black leather purse, gloves, and shoes were obviously new; her simple white blouse was gathered at the throat

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by a cameo brooch, the coral-on-ivory profile of what looked like an elaborately coiffed Colonial dame, that, together with tiny coral earrings, comprised her only jewelry; her white hair was immaculately in place. She appeared to be, Ponsonby thought—well, exactly what she was: the fashionable wife of a very successful American businessman.

"I hope you don't mind my being early?" she said.

"Of course not. I'm delighted. But I thought your husband was coming with you?"

"I arranged to meet him here—told him I had an errand to do on the way. I wanted a few moments alone with you before he gets here to explain the real reason I've persuaded him to come to see you."

"Well, I must admit that your call this morning piqued my curiosity. I've been asking myself all day, now what new light can I possibly shed on Shakespeare's sonnets for a man like Gerald Middleton? And especially, as I warned you on the phone, when the sonnets have never been my special study."

She waved away his doubts. "Gerald doesn't need expertise, Amos. As far as that goes, he's something of an expert on the sonnets himself, and he's been reading up on them for weeks. No, Gerald needs—what?—cleverness? intuition?" She hesitated. "Or maybe it's just that *I* need reassurance. I couldn't be as frank with a stranger as I can be with you. Even after all these years."

"Well, whatever the reason, Lucille, I'm delighted that you're here and that at last I'm going to meet your husband. So tell me how I can help."

She sat in silence for a few moments, gazing into the empty fireplace. Finally she asked, "What would you say, Amos, if Gerald were to announce the purchase of the original manuscript of a newly discovered sonnet by Shakespeare, with a dedication to the Earl of Southampton, both it and the poem in Shakespeare's own handwriting?"

Ponsonby felt his hands begin to tremble. "Good lord!" he murmured. "A new sonnet, after nearly four hundred years! To say nothing of a positive specimen of Shakespeare's handwriting, and the strongest evidence yet that the sonnets *were* meant for Southampton. Why, such an announcement would electrify the literary world, Lucille. It would—" He paused, frowning. "If it were made by almost anyone but your husband, I would think he were either the victim or the perpetrator of a monstrous hoax. But if Gerald Middleton has such a sonnet and is convinced of its authenticity! A man with

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your husband's knowledge of rare manuscripts, a scholar who has amassed one of the finest collections—"

"Ah, but that's just it!" As though she had been waiting for just such a pronouncement Lucille Middleton pounced eagerly on his words. "Gerald has a fine collection, Amos, but he doesn't have a truly great one, and primarily because he doesn't have that unique item which would make his collection outstanding—the sort of item that a library would put on permanent exhibit, that would attract scholars from all over the world. All his life Gerald has dreamed of discovering something like that, some unknown ancient manuscript or an exceedingly rare first edition that would be the showpiece, the crowning glory of his collection, and yet that he could afford to buy. And now he thinks that at last he has found such a crown jewel, and he wants so desperately for it to be true that he's closed his mind to the possibility that this sonnet could be a fake.

"He'll deny that, of course, when he gets here; he'll tell you he's quite aware that it could be a forgery, and that all he's really doing is gambling one hundred thousand dollars on the chance that it isn't. But he's only fooling himself when he says it."

"One hundred thousand? Gambling? But, my dear, if this manuscript has been subjected to all the proper tests and he's still convinced of its authenticity, a hundred thousand would be almost picayune—"

"Oh, he hasn't bought it yet, Amos. And besides, it's not so much the money as what it's going to do to him *after* he buys it, when he does put it to the tests. I know him, Amos, and I know that once it's actually his he'll build up his hopes even higher, that all the while its authenticity is being investigated he'll let his expectations run wild, that he won't be able to refrain from talking about it, from even writing articles for the bibliophilic magazines. And then if the first tests don't come out the way he wants them to, he'll try to explain them away, and he'll keep on getting in deeper and deeper until he's hung his whole reputation as a collector on this one little piece of paper. And then if the day comes that he has to admit it's a forgery he'll be finished, broken, he'll—oh, Amos, it could kill him!" She took a handkerchief out of her purse and dabbed fitfully at her eyes.

"Do you mean to say that he intends to buy this sonnet *before* he has established its authenticity?"

She nodded. "He must. He has to close the deal by nine o'clock tonight or lose out on it. I'll let him explain why—that part sounds

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plausible enough—and I'll let him tell you why he thinks it's authentic. I don't understand very much about that. But, Amos, I have a hunch, a *feeling* that the thing's a fraud, and I beg of you, please, *please* find a way to prove it! You're my last chance to save him from himself."

Ponsonby spread his hands imploringly. "But, Lucille, however fervently your husband wants this sonnet to be authentic, a man of his experience couldn't blind himself to any obvious anomalies in it. And if he hasn't been able to spot it as a forgery, the chances of my doing so in the next hour and a half—"

"But you might! After all, Gerald is really a businessman, Amos, and he's made mistakes before about manuscripts he's been going to buy, overlooking some obvious fault until somebody pointed it out to him."

"But what if there is no obvious fault in this sonnet? Why, I've known a manuscript to survive a dozen tests—x-ray studies, tests of the ink and paper, various chemical tests, letter-by-letter analyses by whole teams of expert paleographers—before someone has spotted the incongruity which has proved it to be a forgery. Proper testing of something like this sonnet might take months; and it shouldn't even be attempted here at Briarwood—your husband should send it on to Cambridge, or to the Folger Museum in Washington."

"Gerald knows all that, Amos, and that's what he intends to do—*after* he's bought it." She sighed, and as though her sigh were a signal, the doorbell rang.

Ponsonby sighed too. "Well, my dear, I'll do what I can."

"I know you will, Amos." She sat erect, stuffing her handkerchief back into her purse.

The Professor gazed with interest at the man who was ushered into his study a moment later and whom Lucille Middleton introduced as her husband, Gerald. The well-known industrialist was in his early sixties, Ponsonby guessed, with a rather florid face and an almost totally bald head. But his light gray suit, paisley tie, and pearl stickpin spoke quietly of his financial success, and his handshake was firm, his gaze no less so as he in turn sized up his host.

"I assume," said Gerald Middleton when the pleasantries had been completed and another chair drawn up to the hearth, "that my wife has explained the reason for this visit?"

"Lucille has told me that you have an opportunity to purchase what could be either the literary discovery of the century—" the

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Professor paused for barely an instant—"or a very clever forgery."

"And you're betting on its being the latter." It was a statement rather than a question.

Ponsonby smiled. "The history of literary finds and frauds being what it is, I'm afraid so, yes."

"Well, suppose I let you inspect it first, and then I'll tell you why I think you're wrong."

"And Amos can point out to you, dear, why you can't possibly be right," observed Lucille brightly.

With an irritated glance at his wife Middleton picked up his attache case from the floor beside his chair, opened it on his knees, and took out a sheet of glass more than a foot square.

As he accepted it Ponsonby saw that it was not one but two sheets of glass taped together all around the edges and enclosing between them a quarto-sized sheet of very brown, obviously very brittle paper. The paper had begun to flake away along one edge, where Time—or was it, Ponsonby wondered, some cunning practice of the forger's art? —had diligently nibbled away at it. At some period in its history and apparently for many years the sheet had been folded in half, and the fold had left a horizontal tear between two lines of the sonnet.

The dedication was scrawled across almost the full width of the sheet, close to the top and angling slightly upward. The sonnet itself was centered approximately an inch below it and seemed to have been written with great attention to uniform margins and straight lines. The ink, which had turned brown, was strikingly uneven, ranging from words and groups of words that were still easily legible to others that had faded almost out of existence. Among the palest of all was a date in the lower left-hand corner: Aprille 1595.

Starting with the dedication, Ponsonby's eyes moved slowly down the page:

> To my most loved & noblest Friende & Benefactor,
> the right Honourable the Earle of Southampton,
> Knighte of the Noble order of the Garter. &c.,
> Wm Shakspere addresses these untutored lines,
> in testimonie of his true & most affectionate Devotion.
>
> Selfe-loving Lovlinesse, canst thou not share
> Some Portion of thy Beauties ample Treassure,
> And from thy selfe cast up a Sonne & Heire

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To thine owne Good & to the wide Worlds Pleasure?
Perfection, issulesse, is lyke a Flower
That stayest ever in the budde of Maye,
Or lyke a silver-shedding Morning hour
That ripens never to the Gold of daye.
Thy Beauty, fruitlesse, is pale counterfeit
Of Natures fruitfull bounteous intent,
And childlesse, thou but Shade or Silloette
Of what were else Her noblest Ornamente.
O, share thy selfe to breed another Thee,
That sharing thus Thou mayst still fairer be.
Aprille 1595 William Shakspere

It took Ponsonby almost fifteen minutes to work his way carefully through the 140-odd words of the dedication and sonnet, largely because the handwriting, if indeed it were not the real thing, was at least a perfect match for the elaborate, strangely alien Elizabethan penmanship: a forest of unexpected loops and curlicues, of h's that dipped almost hysterically below the line, s's that looked like f's when they appeared at the beginning or in the middle of a word and like s's at the end, uncrossed t's and y's and u's that seemed almost quixotically intermixed. The archaic spelling and rather hit-or-miss punctuation and capitalization were also in keeping with the grammatical and calligraphic habits of the Elizabethans as he knew them. And finally there was the familiar sonnet form—three quatrains followed by a couplet that provided an almost epigrammatic close—in which Shakespeare had, indeed, written his known sonnet sequence.

Ponsonby leaned back in his chair and closed his eyes, trying to remember what he knew of that sequence. There were 154 sonnets in all, he recalled, the first 126 addressed to a young highborn patron and friend whom many scholars believed to have been the Earl of Southampton, although that had never been proved. Moreover, the first 17 sonnets urged the noble youth, whoever he had been, to marry and have a son so that his beauty might be perpetuated in his offspring, and these 17 sonnets did so in much the same effusive tones as the poem now before him.

As he had labored through it, Ponsonby had recognized certain words and phrases familiar to him from other words of Shakespeare, and now he began to recall whole lines from the sonnets that seemed to be echoes of those he had just read: *Unthrifty loveliness, why dost thou spend upon thyself thy beauty's legacy?* or *Make*

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thee another self, for love of me, that beauty still may live in thine or thee; or *Thou that art now the world's fresh ornament and only herald to the gaudy spring, within thine own bud buriest thy*—what? *intent? content?* He shrugged mentally. No matter. Because for all its seeming authenticity—he opened his eyes to stare again at the manuscript in his lap—there was something about this sonnet that didn't quite ring true. A false note somewhere, if only he could put his finger on it.

Middleton had been watching him closely. "Well?"

"I think it's a forgery."

"Why?"

"I'm afraid I can't tell you why. Not offhand, at any rate. Call it an old man's intuition if you like. I just think you'd be making a big mistake if you bought it before having its genuineness thoroughly tested."

"I have until nine o'clock tonight either to buy it or to give it up for good."

"So I understand. And in my opinion that in itself is highly suspicious. A legitimate dealer—"

"The man who's offered to sell me that sonnet isn't a legitimate dealer, Professor, and he doesn't pretend to be. He's a thirty-six-year-old high-school English teacher from Anniston, Virginia, who inherited a five-hundred-year-old manor house near London and last summer went over to see what his estate consisted of. Included in it was a trunkful of old manuscripts—family letters, deeds, that sort of thing—most of them dating from the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries, but with a few Seventeenth Century items and just one—that sonnet—with a late Sixteenth Century date on it.

"Now this man is no expert on rare manuscripts, but he knew enough when he saw that sonnet to realize that it could be either the greatest literary prize of all time or just another literary curiosity. The trouble was: which one was it?

"He checked with one of the leading rare-book dealers in New York and learned that if it proved to be what in effect it claims to be, it would be worth as much as ten million dollars—"

Ponsonby could not refrain from gasping.

"—but if it turned out to be a forgery, it would be worth maybe a thousand dollars at most. So not being a gambler but having a healthy respect for money, he worked out what I think is a pretty clever scheme, and one that he's being perfectly aboveboard about. To put it simply, he decided to fatten up his bird-in-hand

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by selling somebody else the chance to catch a whole flock of birds-in-the-bush.

"He did a little investigating and came up with a list of wealthy collectors whom he intends to approach one at a time. Fortunately for me, my name was at the top of the list, so he came to me first. That was three weeks ago. He let me look over the sonnet for just a few minutes, then took it back and told me his terms: I could have three weeks to investigate him in any way I wanted; at the end of that time, if I was still interested, I could have twelve hours to study the manuscript; then either I could buy it from him for one hundred thousand dollars—one per cent of its possible value—or he'd take it to the next man on his list.

"If I buy it I can then put it to any tests I want, and if it turns out to be authentic I'll have bought myself a literary relic second to none in the English-speaking world at a fraction of its value—at only one cent on a dollar. But if it turns out to be a forgery, then I'll have added just another interesting curio to my collection at a cost of one hundred times its worth. The man himself freely admits he has no idea what the chances are that it'll prove to be the real thing, and he knows that twelve hours won't be enough time to for me to find our for sure. In other words, for me it's an out-and-out gamble, and that's exactly how he presented it."

"Good heavens!" said Ponsonby. "How very ingenious! But tell me, Middleton, *have* you had him investigated?"

"Six ways from Sunday, Professor, both here and in England, and everything he told me about himself and this estate he inherited is true. I wasn't able to establish whether or not his ancestor who lived in the house at the end of the Sixteenth Century knew either Shakespeare or Southampton personally, but since he was a gentleman and was received at court, there's no reason he couldn't have known one or the other. Oh, and I also checked with every university and library I know of that might conceivably be qualified to test the authenticity of that sonnet, and I'm satisfied he's telling the truth when he says he hasn't already had that done.

"In short, Professor, as far as I'm concerned I'm not gambling on the man at all, but just on that piece of paper you hold in your hands. He delivered it to me at nine o'clock this morning, so I have just a little more than an hour left to reach a decision."

"I see." Ponsonby frowned thoughtfully at the manuscript. "And may I ask how you've employed your twelve hours up till now?"

"The first thing this morning I had the chief chemist at my

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Clover City plant run such tests as he could on it in a couple hours' time, and he guarantees that both the ink and the paper are a least one hundred years old and quite likely a lot older. But that's as far as he was able to go.

"This afternoon I had a handwriting expert from the State Police come to my home and compare it with facsimiles of the six signatures of Shakespeare that have come down to us, and also with the one hundred and forty-seven lines in that Sixteenth Century play about Sir Thomas More which, as you know, some scholars believe to have been a handwritten insertion by Shakespeare. And this chap said that they could all very well have been written by the same hand."

"But not that they were?"

"Well, no. He wasn't familiar enough with Elizabethan script to commit himself definitely on the basis of such a short examination. But in the time that was left I compared it with Shakespeare's other sonnets and reviewed it in the light of what scholars have been able to establish about those sonnets, and I've been able to find nothing whatsoever inconsistent with the possibility that this is an early sonnet by Shakespeare that somehow never found its way into his published sequence. As a matter of fact, Professor—intending no disrespect to your scholarship—I'm so convinced of its authenticity that my coming here this evening has been more a favor to Lucille than anything else. Because I don't think anything short of the full gamut of scientific tests, all turning out negative, will change my mind about that manuscript."

"I see. Well, I have to admit, Mr. Middleton—" Ponsonby glanced unhappily at Lucille— "that I haven't been able to spot any anachronisms or incongruities in it either. Unless—" He hesitated. "This date in the left-hand bottom corner. If I remember correctly, the sonnets were first published by Thorpe in 1609. So wouldn't 1595 seem a little early?"

"Not at all Professor!" Gerald Middleton pushed forward eagerly to the edge of his chair. "Another Elizabethan writer refers to Shakespeare's 'sugared sonnets among his private friends' in a manuscript that we can definitely date from 1598, so it's certainly tenable that some of the sonnets were being passed around several years before that."

"But a single sonnet, Mr. Middleton? Isn't it true that Elizabethan poets almost always wrote their sonnets as a sequence rather than as single poems?"

"Generally, yes. But two—just two, mind you—of Shakespeare's

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sonnets were printed by Jaggard in 1599 in a book with some other poems attributed to him. They were sonnets one thirty-eight and one forty-four in the Thorpe edition, I think, but it really doesn't matter, because the numbering and the specific sequences were imposed on the sonnets by Thorpe and other printers rather than by Shakespeare himself, and most of the early editions don't even agree. But the point I'm getting at is this: if Jaggard could come up with just two of the sonnets, right out of the heart of the later sequence and ten years before that sequence was published, who can say there weren't others—single poems—floating around? You know how much of that there was in those days—broadsides, ballads, tracts, all sorts of things passed from hand to hand."

"Yes. You have a point. But how about this dedication? We don't know for certain that Shakespeare intended his sonnets for Southampton."

"No, but that's certainly the favored theory. He dedicated *Venus and Adonis* to him in 1593 and *The Rape of Lucrece* in 1594, so what could be more logical than he dedicated a sonnet to him in 1595, quite possibly one of the very first he'd written?"

"Yes, I suppose he could have. But what about the spelling then? I assume you've checked—"

"As far as I can tell, Professor, there's nothing in the spelling that would rule against this sonnet's being authentic, and even if there were some discrepancy, you know what a haphazard approach the Elizabethans took toward spelling. Why, I've seen manuscripts with the same word spelled two different ways within the space of a few lines."

"And the spellings of Shakespeare's name in the dedication and in the signature at the end?"

"Perfectly in keeping with what we know. There are only six known samples of his signature. On three occasions he abbreviated his surname, each time differently; twice he signed it 'S-h-a-k-s-p-e-r-e'; and on the last page of his will he wrote it 's-p-e-a-r-e.' But on the title pages of his published works, even those in which he himself quite likely had a hand, his name is generally spelled the way we spell it today, although often with a hyphen between the 'Shake' and the 'speare.'"

"Hmm. Yes. Well, sir, you seem to have investigated quite thoroughly in the short time you've had."

Middleton eyed him uncertainly. "And yet you still think it's a forgery?"

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"I do, yes. I'll admit it has every appearance of being an authentic Elizabethan manuscript, and if it is that, then it must also be an authentic Shakespearean autograph. Nevertheless, there's something about it, if I could just put my finger—"

"Couldn't it be an authentic Elizabethan manuscript and still be a forgery?" ventured Lucille.

"There'd have been no point to it, my dear," replied Ponsonby. "Whole books and plays were sometimes pirated by unethical printers and sold for a profit, but Shakespeare was not so highly acclaimed in his own day that a single handwritten and signed sonnet of his would have had much value during his lifetime."

Ponsonby turned his attention back to Middleton, a warning finger raised. "But within one hundred or at the most one hundred and fifty years after his death, Mr. Middleton, it *would* have had much more value, and a clever forger of the Eighteenth or Nineteenth Century could very well have been aware of all the points you've made, and worked out his forgery accordingly."

Middleton snorted. "He would have had to be damned knowledgeable, if you ask me."

"But, my dear fellow, the history of English literature is full of such knowledgeable criminals. William Ireland did such a magnificent job of forging his 'Stanzas to Anne Hathaway' and other spurious Shakespearean items that they were actually put on public exhibition in London as 'newly discovered' masterpieces, and the young scoundrel's forged tragedy was even produced on the stage. John Payne Collier was surely one of the Nineteenth Century's foremost Shakespearean scholars, but along with all his very real contributions to scholarship he also forged and then conveniently 'discovered' a whole new Second Folio edition of Shakespeare, with lengthy additions to some of the plays that he himself had made up out of whole cloth. Thomas James Wise was undoubtedly one of the most distinguished book collectors on either side of the Atlantic, and yet he forged—"

"All right, Professor, all right! I'm quite willing to grant you the possibility, even the probability, that this sonnet will ultimately turn out to be a forgery. But unless you can prove that to me now, right here and now, I've simply got to buy it! Good lord, man, do you realize how I'll feel if I pass up the chance and then it turns out to be the real thing? I don't think Lucille quite grasps what it would mean to me to have in my collection a piece of paper that I knew Shakespeare himself had actually handled, had written on, had signed, but you, Professor, surely you can see—"

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"But I *do* see, Mr. Middleton, and believe me I fully understand your passion. It's just that in this instance I think it may be leading you astray." Ponsonby sighed and handed the sonnet back to his guest; he glanced apologetically at Lucille. "I only wish I could be more specific about *why* I think so."

Having returned the glass-encased manuscript to his attache case, Middleton stood up to say goodbye: "I know you think I'm a fool, Professor, and you may be right—perhaps the odds against my having the real thing are ten thousand to one, but even if the odds were larger I can't risk losing it." He turned and moved toward the door.

Lucille, too, had got slowly to her feet and now stepped forward to offer her hand to Ponsonby. "Thank you," she said.

"I'm sorry, Lucille, but I'm afraid I'm just not enough of an expert. Perhaps if there were more time—"

"That's all right, Amos. You tried."

Her eyes suddenly filled with tears and Ponsonby found himself forced to look away, dropping his gaze to the small coral-and-ivory brooch at her throat. He stiffened. "Lucille!" He continued to stare at the brooch, quite unaware that he was still firmly holding her hand.

"Amos?"

"That brooch! Who—?"

"Isn't it pretty? Gerald gave it to me for our thirtieth anniversary last year. And *it* is authentic—late Eighteenth Century French. That's supposed to be Madame de Pompadour, I think."

"Pompadour?"

"You know, Louie's mistress—one of the Louies. I can never keep their numbers straight."

"But of course! Madame de Pompadour! And she's trying to tell us something, Lucille. Here—Middleton—" Ponsonby whirled to face the industrialist—"let me see that sonnet again!"

Frowning uncertainly, Gerald Middleton set the attache case on the desk and once again removed the manuscript.

Ponsonby sank slowly onto a chair, his fingers drumming a light tattoo on the edge of the desk as his eyes raced again over the sonnet. "Whatever it was I thought I saw here before, Madama de Pompadour has just rung a bell—oh, very faint, mind you, but I'm sure it's here, if I can just—yes! *Yes,* by heaven! This *is* a fake, Middleton, a glorious, shameless forgery, and the forger was so busy worrying about his Elizabethan penmanship and his archaic

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spelling and his echoes of Shakespeare that he blundered into a monstrous, ridiculous error!"

Gerald Middleton came briskly around the desk to lean over Ponsonby's shoulder. "What the devil are you talking about?"

Lucille's laughter brushed the edge of hysteria. "Oh, Amos, that's wonderful! But what in the world does Madame de Pompadour have to do with it?"

"Because Madame de Pompadour, my dear, is one of a small group of people whose names have worked their way into our English language as common words. Of course Pompadour wasn't her real name—I believe she took that from a chateau that Louis gave her when he made her a marquise; but thanks to her you'll still find it in any English dictionary—small p, of course—defined as a style of dressing the hair.

"Actually, you know, only a very few people have been thus immortalized by our language. If you leave out the scientists—Watt, Volt, Ampere, and all those fellows—I daresay there have been scarcely a dozen. Let me see, there was Captain Charles Boycott, an estate manager in Ireland whose surname entered the language when his tenants banded together and refused to harvest his crops because of his high rents—that is, boycotted him. Then there was a noted Tyburn hangman by the name of Derrick who built such fine gallows that his name first became synonymous with any overhead hoisting apparatus and ultimately was applied to oil-well rigging. And then there was the Earl of Sandwich, of course, and General Shrapnel and Justice Lynch and Charles Macintosh, who invented a waterproof garment material. And then there was—"

"But confound it, Professor, what has all that to do with the sonnet?"

"Because that was the first bell that Madame de Pompadour rang in my mind, don't you see? But obviously she herself couldn't have been what I'd been trying to remember, so I asked to see the sonnet again, and then I saw it—it wasn't Madame de Pompadour at all, it was her finance minister!"

"Her *finance minister?*"

"Well, actually Louis XV's finance minister, of course, but Madame de Pompadour had considerable influence in getting him appointed. Comptroller-general, I believe, was his actual title. In any event he no sooner got the job—1750, 1760, whenever—than he began demanding unheard-of financial sacrifices on the part of the French nobility—leveling excessive new taxes on their estates, forcing them

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to cut down on their style of living, to reduce their households—so that his name soon became popular slang among the French upper classes for something stripped of all finery, for a figure reduced to its simplest form."

"Con*found* it, Ponsonby!"

"Amos, *please*!"

The Professor raised a silencing hand as he pushed doggedly on with his lecture. "Now if that had been the end of the story, our *English* language most likely would never have heard his name, but it just so happened that about that same time a new art fad was coming into vogue in France, a new kind of portraiture which, in a sense, also represented a figure reduced to its simplest form, and in which the good gentleman became quite an aficionado, both as a collector and as a practitioner. So what could have been more natural than that his name should also become attached to this new art form, travel with it to England, and there ultimately become a part of our English language?"

Ponsonby settled back in his chair, trying to compose his features in an expression that he hoped would not entirely betray his—he had to admit—smug satisfaction.

Gerald Middleton slowly straightened up from bending over the sonnet and turned with a sigh to stare out the window. "Yes," he said. "I see now what you mean. And of course I should have checked it word for word against a dictionary. But it seemed so—" He let the sentence die. "About when, would you say?"

"Not before early in the Nineteenth Century, I should think. I imagine it would have taken at least that long for the word to be absorbed so thoroughly into the language that even a clever forger could have overlooked its origin."

"Hey, you two!" Lucille clapped her hands to get their attention. "Will you please let me in on this? I still don't understand how you know it's a forgery."

"Because," explained Ponsonby, "like Captain Boycott, hangman Derrick, and the rest, this otherwise long-forgotten French minister bequeathed his name to our English language, but this was not until at least one hundred and fifty years after Shakespeare's death, so that it could not possibly have been a part of Shakespeare's vocabulary."

"And you mean—in the sonnet?"

"Yes, my dear. There, lurking beneath the forger's deliberately archaic spelling, is the name of Louis XV's parsimonious Comptroller-general, Etienne de Silhouette."

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FIRST PRIZE WINNER NUMBER 12

Avram Davidson's First Prize Winner of 1956 is perhaps Mr. Davidson's finest short story. The author is a born storyteller (a much abused phrase that nevertheless fits Mr. Davidson perfectly) who seems equally at home spinning every conceivable type of story. As his many appearances in *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* have attested through the years, he has the astonishing knack of being able to write about any geographical background, about any kind of character, and about any culture, ancient or modern, alien or native—and always with a startling authenticity.

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Yes, a born storyteller, Mr. Davidson has taken apparently familiar materials, recast them, and achieved both originality and impact. With deceptive simplicity, with perception and artistry, he has struck at the heart of the problem, bringing the whole question of "the dignity of man" into sharp and revealing focus . . .

THE NECESSITY OF HIS CONDITION

by AVRAM DAVIDSON

SHOLTO HILL WAS MOSTLY RESIdential property, but it had its commercial district in the shape of Persimmon Street and Rampart Street, the latter named after some long-forgotten barricade stormed and destroyed by Benedict Arnold (wearing a British uniform and eaten with bitterness and perverted pride). Persimmon Street, running up-slope, entered the middle of Rampart at right angles, and went no farther. This section, with its red brick houses and shops, its warehouses and offices, was called The T, and it smelled of tobac-

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co and potatoes and molasses and goober peas and dried fish and beer and cheap cookshop food and (the spit-and-whittle humorists claimed) old man Bailiss' office, where the windows were never opened—never had *been* opened, they said, never were *made* to be opened. Any smell off the street or farms or stables that found its way up to Bailiss' office was imprisoned there for life, they said. Old man Bailiss knew what they said, knew pretty much everything that went on anywhere; but he purely didn't care. He didn't have to, they said.

J. Bailiss, Attorney-at-Law (his worn old sign said), had a large practice and little competition. James Bailiss, Broker (his newer, but by no means new, sign), did an extensive business; again, with little competition. The premises of the latter business were located, not in The T, but in a white-washed stone structure with thick doors and barred windows, down in The Bottom—as it was called—near the river, the canal, and the railroad line.

James Bailiss, Broker, was not received socially. Nobody expected that bothered him much. Nothing bothered old man Bailiss much—Bailiss, with his old white hat and his old black coat and his old cowhide shoes that looked old even when they were new—turned old on the shoemaker's last (the spit-and-whittle crowd claimed) directly they heard whose feet they were destined for.

It was about twenty-five years earlier, in 1825, that an advertisement—the first of its kind—appeared in the local newspaper.

"*Take Notice!* (it began). James Bailiss, having lately purchased the old arsenal building on Canal Street, will henceforth operate it as a Negro Depot. He will at all times be found ready to purchase all good and likely young Negroes at the Highest Price. He will also attend to Selling Negroes on Commission. Said Broker also gives Notice that those who have Slaves rendered unfit for labor by yaws, scrofula, chronic consumption, rheumatism, & C., may dispose of them to him on reasonable terms."

Editor Winstanley tried to dissuade him, he said later. "Folks," he told him, "won't like this. This has never been said out open before," the editor pointed out. Bailiss smiled. He was already middle-aged, had a shiny red face and long mousy hair. His smile wasn't a very wide one.

"Then I reckon I must be the pioneer," he said. "This isn't a big plantation State, it never will be. I've give the matter right much thought. I reckon it just won't pay for anyone to own more than half a dozen slaves in these parts. But they will multiply, you can't stop it. I've seen it in my lawwork, seen many a planter broke for debts he's gone into to buy field

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hands—signed notes against his next crop, or maybe even his next three crops. Then maybe the crop is so good that the price of cotton goes way down and he can't meet his notes, so he loses his lands *and* his slaves. If the price of cotton should happen to be high enough for him to pay for the slaves he's bought, then, like a dumned food"—Bailiss never swore—"why, he stgns notes for a few more. Pretty soon things get so bad you can't *give* slaves away round here. So a man has a dozen of them eating their heads off and not even earning grocery bills. No, Mr. Winstanley; slaves must be sold south and southwest, where the new lands are being opened up, where the big plantations are."

Editor Winstanley wagged his head. "I know," he said, "I know. But folks don't like to say things like that out loud. The slave trade is looked down on. You know that. It's a necessary evil, that's how it's regarded, like a—well . . " He lowered his voice. "Nothing personal, but . . . like a sporting house. Nothing personal, now, Mr. Bailiss."

The attorney-broker smiled again. "Slavery has the sanction of the law. It is a necessary part of the domestic economy, just like cotton. Why, suppose I should say, 'I love my cotton, I'll only sell it locally'? People'd think I was just crazy. Slaves have become a surplus product in the Border States and they must be disposed of where they are not produced in numbers sufficient to meet the local needs. You print that advertisement. Folks may not ask me to dinner, but they'll sell to me, see if they won't."

The notice did, as predicted, outrage public opinion. Old Marsta and Old Missis vowed no Negro of *theirs* would ever be sold "down the River." But somehow the broker's "jail"—as it was called—kept pretty full, though its boarders changed. Old man Bailiss had his agents out buying and his agents out selling. Sometimes he acted as agent for firms whose headquarters were in Natchez or New Orleans. He entered into silent partnerships with gentlemen of good family who wanted a quick return on capital, and who got it, but who still, it was needless to say, did not dine with him or take his hand publicly. There was talk, on and off, that the Bar Association was planning action not favorable to Bailiss for things connected with the legal side of his trade. It all came to nought.

"Mr. Bailiss," young Ned Wickerson remarked to him one day in the old man's office, "whoever said that 'a man who defends himself has a fool for a client' never had the pleasure of your acquaintance."

"Thank you, boy."

"Consequently," the young man continued, "I've advised Sam

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Worth not to go into court if we can manage to settle out of it."

"First part of your advice is good, but there's nothing to settle."

"There's a matter of $635 to settle, Mr. Bailiss." Wickerson had been practicing for two years, but he still had freckles on his nose. He took a paper out of his wallet and put it in front of them. "There's this to settle."

The old man pushed his glasses down his nose and picked up the paper. He scanned it, lips moving silently. "Why, this is all correct," he said. "Hmm. To be sure. 'Received of Samuel Worth of Worth's Crossing, Lemuel County, the sum of $600 cash in full payment for a Negro named Dominick Swift, commonly called Domino, aged thirty-six years and of bright complexion, which Negro I warrant sound in mind and body and a slave for life and the title I will forever defend. James Bailiss, Rutland, Lemuel County.' Mmm. All correct. And anyway, what do you mean, six hundred and *thirty-five* dollars?"

"Medical and burial expenses. Domino died last week."

"Died, now, did he? Sho. Too bad. Well, all men are mortal."

"I'm afraid my client doesn't take much comfort from your philosophy. Says he didn't get two days' work out of Domino. Says he whipped him, first off, for laziness, but when the doctor—Dr. Sloan, that was—examined him, Doctor said he had a consumption. Died right quickly."

"Negroes *are* liable to quick consumptions. Wish they was a medicine for it. On the other hand, they seldom get malaria or yella fever. Providence."

He cut off a slice of twist, shoved it in his cheek, then offered twist and knife to Wickerson, who shook his head.

"As I say, we'd rather settle out of court. If you'll refund the purchase price we won't press for the other expenses. What do you say?"

Bailiss looked around the dirty, dusty office. There was a case of law books with broken bindings against the north wall. The south wall had a daguerreotype of John C. Calhoun hanging crookedly on it. The single dim window was in the east wall, and the west wall was pierced by a door whose lower panels had been scarred and splintered by two generations of shoes and boots kicking it open. "Why, I say no, o' course."

Wickerson frowned. "If you lose, you know, you'll have to pay *my* costs as well."

"I don't expect I'll lose," the old man said.

"Why, of course you'll lose," the young man insisted, although he did not sound convinced. "Dr. Sloan will testify that it was *not* 'a quick consumption.' He says it was a long-standing case of Negro tuberculosis. And you warranted the man sound."

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"Beats me how them doctors think up long words like that," Bailiss said placidly. "Inter'sting point of law just come up down in N'Orleans, Ned. One of my agents was writing me. Negro brakeman had his legs crushed in a accident, man who rented him to the railroad sued, railroad pleaded 'negligence of his fellow-servant'—in this case, the engineer."

"Seems like an unassailable defense." The younger lawyer was interested despite himself. "What happened?"

"Let's see if I can recollect the Court's words." This was mere modesty. Old man Bailiss' memory was famous on all matters concerning the slave codes. "Mmm. Yes. Court said: 'The slave status has removed this man from the normal fellow-servant category. He is fettered fast by the most stern bonds our laws take note of. He cannot with impunity desert his post though danger plainly threatens, nor can he reprove free men for their bad management or neglect of duty, for the necessity of his condition is upon him.' Awarded the owner—Creole man name of Le Tour—awarded him $1300."

"It seems right, put like that. but now, Dr. Sloan—"

"Now, Neddy. Domino was carefully examined by *my* Doctor, old Fred Pierce—"

"Why, Pierce hasn't drawn a sober breath in twenty years! He gets only slaves for his patients."

"Well, I reckon that makes him what they call a specialist, then. No, Ned, don't go to court. You have no case. My jailer will testify, too, that Domino was sound when I sold him. It must of been that whipping sickened him."

Wickerson rose. "Will you make *partial* restitution, then?" The old man shook his head. His long hair was streaked with gray, but the face under it was still ruddy. "You *know* Domino was sick," Wickerson said. "I've spoken to old Miss Whitford's man, Micah, the blacksmith, who was doing some work in your jail a while back. He told me that he heard Domino coughing, saw him spitting blood, saw you watching him, saw you give him some rum and molasses, heard you say, 'Better not cough till I've sold you, Dom, else I'll have to sell you south where they don't coddle Negroes.' This was just before you *did* sell him—to my client."

The old man's eyes narrowed. "I'd say Micah talks overmuch for a black man, even one of old Miss Whitford's—a high and mighty lady that doesn't care to know me on the street. But you forget one mighty important thing, Mr. Wickerson!" His voice rose. He pointed his finger. "It makes no difference what Micah heard! Micah is property! Just like my horse is property! And property can't testify! Do you claim to be a lawyer? Don't you know that a slave can't in-

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herit—can't bequeath—can't marry nor give in marriage—can neither sue nor prosecute—and that it's a basic principle of the law that a slave can never testify in court except against another slave?"

Wickerson, his lips pressed tightly together, moved to the door, kicked it open, scattering a knot of idlers who stood around listening eagerly, and strode away. The old man brushed through them.

"And you'd better tell Sam Worth not to come bothering me, either!" Bailiss shouted at Wickerson's back. "I know how to take care of trash like him!" He turned furiously to the gaping and grinning loungers.

"Get away from here, you mudsills!" He was almost squeaking in his rage.

"I reckon you don't own the sidewalks," they muttered. "I reckon every white man in this state is as good as any other white man," they said; but they gave way before him. The old man stamped back into his office and slammed the door.

It was Bailiss' custom to have his supper in his own house, a two-story building just past the end of the sidewalk on Rampart Street; but tonight he felt disinclined to return there with no one but rheumaticky old Edie, his housekeeper-cook, for company. He got on his horse and rode down toward the cheerful bustle of the Phoenix Hotel. Just as he was about to go in, Sam Worth came out. Worth was a barrel-shaped man with thick short arms and thick bandy legs. He stood directly in front of Bailiss, breathing whiskey fumes.

"So you won't settle?" he growled. His wife, a stout woman taller than her husband, got down from their wagon and took him by the arm.

"Come away, now, Sam," she urged.

"You'd better step aside," Bailiss said.

"I hear you been making threats against me," Worth said.

"Yes, and I'll carry them out, too, if you bother me!"

A group quickly gathered, but Mrs. Worth pulled her husband away, pushed him toward the wagon; and Bailiss went inside. The buzz of talk dropped for a moment as he entered, stopped, then resumed in a lower register. He cast around for a familiar face, undecided where to sit; but it seemed to him that all faces were turned away. Finally he recognized the bald head and bent shoulders of Dr. Pierce, who was slumped at a side table by himself, muttering into a glass. Bailiss sat down heavily across from him, with a sigh. Dr. Pierce looked up.

"A graduate of the University of Virginia," the doctor said. His eyes were dull.

"At it again?" Bailiss looked

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around for a waiter. Dr. Pierce finished what was in his glass.

"Says he'll horsewhip you on sight," he muttered.

"Who says?" Bailiss was surprised.

"Major Jack Moran."

Bailiss laughed. The Major was a tottery veteran of the War of 1812 who rode stiffly about on an aged white mare. "What for?" he asked.

"Talk is going around you Mentioned A Lady's Name." Pierce beckoned, and at once a waiter, whose eye old man Bailiss had not managed to catch, appeared with a full glass. Bailiss caught his sleeve as the waiter was about to go and ordered his meal. The doctor drank. "Major Jack says, impossible to Call You Out—can't appear on Field of Honor with slave trader—so instead will whip you on sight." His voice gurgled in the glass.

Bailiss smiled crookedly. "I reckon I needn't be afraid of him. He's old enough to be my daddy. A lady's name? What lady? Maybe he means a lady who lives in a big old house that's falling apart, an old lady who lives on what her Negro blacksmith makes?"

Dr. Pierce made a noise of assent. He put down his glass. Bailiss looked around the dining room, but as fast as he met anyone's eyes, the eyes glanced away. The doctor cleared his throat.

"Talk is going around you expressed a dislike for said Negro. Talk is that the lady has said she is going to manumit him to make sure you won't buy him if she dies."

Bailiss stared. "Manumit him? She can't do that unless she posts a bond of a thousand dollars to guarantee that he leaves the state within ninety days after being freed. She must know that free Negroes aren't allowed to stay on after manumission. And where would she get a thousand dollars? And what would she live on if Micah is sent away? That old lady hasn't got good sense!"

"No," Pierce agreed, staring at the glass. "She is old and not too bright and she's got too much pride on too little money, but it's a sis"—his tongue stumbled—"a singular thing: there's hardly a person in this town, white or black or halfbreed Injun, that doesn't *love* that certain old lady. Except you. And *no*body in town loves *you*. Also a singular thing: here we are—"

The doctor's teeth clicked against the glass. He set it down, swallowed. His eyes were yellow in the corners, and he looked at Bailiss steadily, save for a slight trembling of his hands and head. "Here we are, heading just as certain as can be towards splitting the Union and having war with the Yankees—all over slavery—tied to it hand and foot—willing to die for it—economy bound up in it—sure

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in our own hearts that nature and justice and religion are for it—and yet, singular thing: nobody likes slave traders. Nobody likes them."

"Tell me something new." Bailiss drew his arms back to make room for his dinner. He ate noisily and with good appetite.

"Another thing," the doctor hunched forward in his seat, "That hasn't added to your current popularity is this business of Domino. In this, I feel, you made a mistake. *Caveat emptor* or not, you should've sold him farther away from here, much farther away, down to the rice fields somewhere, where his death would have been just a statistic in the overseer's annual report. Folks feel you've cheated Sam Worth. He's not one of your rich absentee owners who sits in town and lets some cheese-paring Yankee drive his Negroes. He only owns four or five, he and his boy work right alongside them in the field, pace them row for row."

Bailiss grunted, sopped up gravy.

"You've been defying public opinion for years now. There might come a time when you'd want good will. My advice to you—after all, your agent only paid $100 for Domino—is to settle with Worth for five hundred."

Bailiss wiped his mouth on his sleeve. He reached for his hat, put it on, left money on the table, and got up.

"Shoemaker, stick to your last," he said. Dr. Pierce shrugged. "Make that glass the final one. I want you at the jail tomorrow, early, so we can get the catalogue ready for the big sale next week. Hear?" the old man walked out, paying no attention to the looks or comments his passage caused.

On his horse Bailiss hesitated. The night was rather warm, with a hint of damp in the air. He decided to ride around for a while in the hope of finding a breeze stirring. As the horse ambled along from one pool of yellow gaslight to another he ran through in his mind some phrases for inclusion in his catalogue. *Phyllis, prime woman, aged 25, can cook, sew, do fine ironing. . .*

When he had first begun in the trade, three out of every five Negroes had been named Cuffee, Cudjoe, or Quash. He'd heard these were days of the week in some African dialect. There was talk that the African slave trade might be legalized again; that would be a fine thing. But, sho, there was always such talk, on and off.

The clang of a hammer on an anvil reminded him that he was close to Black Micah's forge. As he rounded the corner he saw Sam Worth's bandy-legged figure outlined against the light. One of the horses was unhitched from his wagon and awaited the shoe Micah was preparing for it.

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A sudden determination came to Bailiss: he would settle with Worth about Domino. He hardly bothered to analyze his motives. Partly because his dinner was resting well and he felt comfortable and unexpectedly benevolent; partly because of some vague notion it would be the popular thing to do and popularity was a good thing to have before and during a big sale, he made up his mind to offer Worth $300—well, maybe he would go as high as $350, but no more; a man had to make *some*thing out of a trade.

As he rode slowly up to the forge and stopped, the blacksmith paused in his hammering and looked out. Worth turned around. In the sudden silence Bailiss heard another horse approaching.

"I've come to settle with you," the slave trader said. Worth looked up at him, his eyes bloodshot. In a low, ugly voice Worth cursed him, and reached his hand toward his rear pocket. It was obvious to Bailiss what Worth intended, so the slave trader quickly drew his own pistol and fired. His horse reared, a woman screamed—did *two* women scream? Without his meaning it, the other barrel of his pistol went off just as Worth fell.

"Fo' gawdsake don't kill me, Mister Bailiss!" Micah cried. "Are you all right, Miss Elizabeth?" he cried. Worth's wife and Miss Whitford suddenly appeared from the darkness on the other side of the wagon. They knelt beside Worth.

Bailiss felt a numbing blow on his wrist, dropped his empty pistol, was struck again, and half fell, was half dragged, from his horse. A woman screamed again, men ran up—where had they all come from? Bailiss, pinned in the grip of someone he couldn't see, stood dazed.

"You infernal scoundrel, you shot that man in cold blood!" Old Major Jack Moran dismounted from his horse and flourished the riding crop with which he had struck Bailiss on the wrist.

"I never—he cussed me—he reached for his pistol—I only defended myself!"

Worth's wife looked up, tears streaking her heavy face.

"He had no pistol," she said. "I made him leave it home."

"You said, 'I've come to get you,' and you shot him point-blank!" The old Major's voice trumpeted.

"He tried to shoot Miss Whitford too!" someone said. Other voices added that Captain Carter, the High Sheriff's chief deputy, was coming. Bodies pressed against Bailiss, faces glared at him, fists were waved before him.

"It wasn't like that at all!" he cried.

Deputy Carter came up on the gallop, flung the reins of his black mare to eager outthrust hands, jumped off, and walked over to Worth.

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"How was it, then?" a scornful voice asked Bailiss.

"I rode up . . . I says, 'I've come to settle with you' . . . He cussed at me, low and mean, and he reached for his hip pocket."

In every face he saw disbelief.

"Major Jack's an old man," Bailiss faltered. "He heard it wrong. He—"

"Heard it good enough to hang you!"

Bailiss looked desperately around. Carter rose from his knees and the crowd parted. "Sam's dead, ma'am," he said. "I'm sorry." Mrs. Worth's only reply was a low moan. The crowd growled. Captain Carter turned and faced Bailiss, whose eyes looked at him for a brief second, then turned frantically away. And then Bailiss began to speak anxiously—so anxiously that his words came out a babble. His arms were pinioned and he could not point, but he thrust his head toward the forge where the blacksmith was still standing—standing silently.

"Micah," Bailiss stuttered. "Ask Micah!"

Micah saw it, he wanted to say —wanted to shout it. *Micah was next to Worth, Micah heard what I really said, he's younger than the Major, his hearing is good, he saw Worth reach . . .*

Captain Carter placed his hand on Bailiss and spoke, but Bailiss did not hear him. The whole night had suddenly fallen silent for him, except for his own voice, saying something (it seemed long ago) to young lawyer Wickerson.

"It makes no difference what Micah saw! It makes no difference what Micah heard! Micah is property! . . . And property can't testify!"

They tied Bailiss' hands and heaved him onto his horse.

"He is fettered fast by the most stern bonds our laws take note of . . . can't inherit—can't bequeath . . . can neither sue nor prosecute—"

Bailiss turned his head as they started to ride away. He looked at Micah and their eyes met. Micah knew.

". . . it's basic principle of the law that a slave can never testify in court except against another slave."

Someone held the reins of old man Bailiss' horse. From now on he moved only as others directed. The lights around the forge receded. Darkness surrounded him. The necessity of his condition was upon him.

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Coming soon . . .

NEW short stories and novelets by

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BEST MYSTERIES OF THE MONTH
recommended by JOHN DICKSON CARR

A British correspondent writes from Sussex to bewail the dearth of first-rate detective novels fairly and classically displaying all the clues. *"Where are the new writers?"* demands my correspondent, and then goes on griping (*anglice* grousing) very much as I do.

"Where is the new Ellery Queen? The new Agatha Christie?" He is even indulgent enough to mention my own name, linking it with that of another low hound called Carter Dickson. *"Is the theme played out? This I can't believe. And yet—I only wish you could reassure me."*

Well, I can reassure him. By the year's end I shall be able to cite at least four brilliant new detective writers of the true breed. Though each has had several books published prior to '69, all may be called newcomers in the sense that none is a limping graybeard like Dickson or Carr. And two of the four so characterized, *Dei gratia,* I am proud to present in this very issue.

With Inspector Martin Beck, Stockholm Police, of *The Man Who Went Up in Smoke,* by Maj Sjowall and Per Wahloo (Pantheen, $4.50), we meet a Swedish sleuth as human as Maigret, as tenacious as Gideon, as astute as both put together. We know what will happen when some hard-working cop is looking forward to his vacation; he has less chance of getting it than any secret agent off duty. Hauled back to work by the Swedish Foreign Office, even more ponderous and stuffed-shirt than our own State Department, Beck is sent behind the Iron Curtain to trace a bibulous magazine writer who has taken off for Budapest and there vanished like a soap-bubble.

With the police of several countries honestly seeking Alf Matsson, what has Matsson been up to and where is he? You may suspect espionage until you fetch up against a problem in dirty work as secret as spying and fully as dirty. Returning to Stockholm after more than one explosive encounter beside the Danube, amid toppling ruins Martin Beck solves the mystery with evidence he has known all along. This husband-and-wife collaboration, here treated as one entity, explains everything except how to pronounce their names.

Though *The Third Half,* by Mildred Davis (Crime Club, $4.50) purports to be a web of espionage and is in fact just that, the web's strongest strands stretch farther than international chicancery: they are woven of human meanness and greed. And its technique,

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clue after clue, casually mentioned amid rapid-fire action, is that of the expert detective story.

But there is nothing casual about the story. We are at full stretch of tension as we watch three in the web: the elderly physicist whose young wife has been abducted on that Vermont ski-slope, the Michigan housewife bereft of an aeronautical-engineer husband during his visit to Japan, the American girl married to a British landowner whose castle dates back to the Norman Conquest. Let it be repeated that here is detective-story technique to the last gasp. A double-twist surprise finale may yank the rug from under you; don't believe *anything* until four pages before the end. And a hearty welcome for Miss Davis to the tribe of Honest Men.

A Mafia Kiss, by Philip Loraine (Random House, $4.95) engulfs us at once in the mire of underworld crime. From New York to Sicily, home of his fathers, comes young Benedict Lister, born Benedette Secca for all his Americanization now. Still ruling lives by terror and violence, the Mafia has marked him out; he no sooner sets foot in Palerme than the bomb which should have blown him to pieces blows up somebody else instead.

Then it's pull-devil, pull-murderer for a wild battle in which well-meaning Ben, alone but for Rosalie's help, matches himself against the whole organization and as vicious a Central Bastard as ever presided. Mystery (of a sort) may be found even here. At first unknown to himself, though honorably hinted at by the author, Ben has up his sleeve a secret ace of trumps with which, in a sudden reverse-tactics move at the end, he outfaces his enemy when all seems lost. Mr. Loraine, who really understands the meaning of the word suspense, can always be relied on.

Its admirably light touch never quite hiding grim purpose underneath, George Marten's and Tiber Meray's *Catch Me A Spy* (Harper & Row, $4.95) conjures up every vivid image of the cloak and dagger. After a wedding in Westminster Abbey, after the beginning of a honeymoon inexplicably diverted from Italy to Bulgaria, British businessman John Fenton and Jessica, his bride, get only as far as Sofia when John is pounced on by Communist cops.

Desperately trying to free her husband from clink, Jessica gets little aid either from the head of M.I.5 or from a double-faced Russian admirer in the background. Only Uncle Henry stands firm amid uproar. With John at last restored through very strange means, we realize that *Catch Me A Spy* is both strong thriller and sound mystery, qualities seldom found in the same book. Don't miss this one.

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a NEW secret-service story by

JACOB HAY

When is a story not a story? Or more accurately, as in this instance, when is a non-story a story? Judge for yourself—but how much this new Jacob Hay story, seemingly so plotless, tells us about the life and times of the British Intelligence Service! It could even be said that like Perryman's office, this story is a "capsule history of the British Empire" ...

THAT WAS THE DAY THAT WAS

by JACOB HAY

OUTSIDE THE TALL WINDOWS A dismal autumnal rain wept over a cheerless London.

The office had an antique elegance about it, enhanced by the small blaze crackling on the hearth, inside a frame of black marble. Above the mantelpiece hung the age-cracked portrait of Samuel Pepys, who had begun it all more than two centuries ago, when the Royal Navy really ruled the waves and there was a growing need to know what the other chaps were up to. With the diarist began that great and anonymous succession of men whose business it was to know what the other chaps were up to.

Perryman was the last in the long line. Tall, lean of feature and figure, distinguished by the wings of iron-gray hair that swept past his small ears, he stood by the fireplace and gazed thoughtfully into the flickering flames. In one of the deep high-backed chairs sat his deputy, George Butt, a stocky, ruddy man who would have followed his yeoman father's footsteps as Yorkshire farmer had not a clerical error put him into his battalion's intelligence section in the confusion after Dunkirk. There, his dumfounded superiors discovered that behind that rude clay lurked an astonishing brain, penetrating, precise, analytical, and marvelously clear.

There was a discreet knock at

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the tall mahogany double doors.

"Come," Perryman said, glancing up. It was Miss Shaw-Jones, his secretary.

"Excuse me, Sir John. It's the gentleman from the Ministry of Works, asking if he might take a few measurements."

Perryman glanced at Butt, who smiled crookedly. "Send him in by all means, Miss Shaw-Jones. We mustn't keep the Ministry of Works waiting, must we?"

The man from the Ministry came in, quite obviously trying to conceal his awe behind a facade of brisk efficiency and genial bonhomie. "Sir John Perryman? Fowler's the name, sir, Stores and Structures Section. They'll have told you I was coming." Perryman nodded. "Well, well, well," Fowler went on, "I'll tell you straight, sir, this is the one office in London I never expected to see the inside of, and that's the truth."

Fowler gazed around the vast high-ceilinged room with admiration, his eyes pausing at the red telephone on Perryman's desk, by the long row of ivory buttons. The phone had once been connected directly with No. 10, with Brussels, and with a vast sprawling building in northern Virginia, just across the Potomac River from Washington, D.C., in the United States.

"I wonder, Mr. Fowler, if you could give us any idea of what use they intend to put this room," Butt inquired, withdrawing a stubby brier from his coat pocket and fumbling for his tobacco pouch with his other hand.

"Why, yes, indeed, sir. It's to be the typing pool for the Department of Rabies Control, Home Counties Division, with the small cubical for the supervisor." Fowler looked critically at the splendid marble fireplace. "To bad about that, actually, but it'll have to go, of course."

"Of course," Butt agreed, tamping tobacco into his pipe.

Fowler was already busy with a steel tape measure, unwinding it from its case. In twenty minutes, with a great deal of muttering to himself and much jotting down of figures in a small, black, loose-leaf notebook, Fowler had finished and taken his departure. Perryman and Butt had not spoken during the period.

The red telephone rang, and a reb bulb in a socket beside it flashed. Perryman moved leisurely to pick it up, held it to his ear briefly, nodded, and replaced it in its cradle. Butt looked at him inquiringly. "Just letting us know that they're cutting the phone off as of five o'clock," Perryman said.

Butt nodded. "Not wasting any time, are they?"

Perryman smiled, a trifle grimly. "That would seem to wrap it up, wouldn't it? You know, George, I'm still quite worried

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over Thurston; somehow I can't see him fitting into Internal Revenue."

"Oh, he'll be all right, John. He has only a few years to go for his pension. And besides, they do a good deal of snooping in Internal Revenue. Bert might feel quite at home, you know."

Perryman nodded absently. "I'm delighted Shaw-Jones took it so well. Teddy Hamilton's been trying to lure her to the Ministry of Supply for years, and heaven knows the wages will be better than we've been able to give her. I remember when she joined us, just after the war, a pert young thing just out of the Wrens."

"We've none of us grown any younger, John," Butt said gently.

"Odd that Witherington should opt to stay on in Kashmir," Perryman mused. "I know it's quite lovely, but he has no family out there."

"You read his final report. Apparently that import-export business he bought into as cover has become quite successful, and he's simply decided to carry on with a good thing." Butt grinned. "We should probably envy him, if only for the climate."

At least, Perryman thought, we've been able to find slots for most of them, or they've found slots of their own. He felt a surge of pride: not one of them had gone over, despite the shameful treatment accorded them and the abrupt cancellations of their contracts by some indecipherable Ministry of Defense signature. Some of them held regular commissions, but how does a man return to a non-existent regimental mess or wardroom? How does he stand up to the hard truth that his life's work and the death of his friends in the service have been a waste of time, that the whole business has finally become irrelevant? What, for example, could young Prentice do with the Tibetan language he had taken years to master? How many young sons and daughters would Goulding's superb skills as a cryptanalyst manage to feed and shelter?

This would be bitter beer, too, for a man like Gillivray, who sat paraplegic in a wheel chair in a cold stone farmhouse in Aberdeenshire, his spine damaged by an East German machine-gun bullet only two years before when he brought out the Russian order-of-battle along the Oder. And Hall, sightless in Hong Kong, living—if it could be called that—on the opium the Communist Chinese had taught him to desire above all that men hold dear before they blinded him and dumped him from a truck in front of the British Residency.

Best that Fleming had died before this, Perryman told himself. Be ghastly to have one's whole stock in trade knocked into a

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shabby cocked hat, to see one's Aston-Martin driven by a Carnaby Street type wearing a Ban-the-Bomb button. But Fleming had lived long enough to see the signs and portents. The Richard Hannays were all dead, along with the Ashendens.

They were all as dead and gone as G. A. Henty's heroes, and there were none to replace them, nor would there ever be again. Nowadays, it seemed, they were all mercenaries, working in a savage jungle. They had become tradesmen.

And yet that was hardly fair.

But what the hell did it matter? It had never been known as a profession in which fairness counted for much; indeed, fairness had usually equated with a bullet in the brain. Or a bomb under the car, as Mrs. George Butt had discovered to her split-second dismay when she had impetuously decided to drive into Red Hill for a day's shopping shortly after her husband had returned from an assigment in Indonesia. And George had accepted it—for Queen and Country—and had somehow survived, somehow kept his sanity.

But not Kim Philby.

Perryman's mouth tightened.

And not Philby alone. There had been others. The machine was wearing out, running down as inferior oil lubricated its complex gears. The premium grade had once made the machine the best in the world, but then the premium grade had been compounded of idealism and a belief in the worth and word of Britain. Now the works were clogged with the gravel of dissent and discontent, and the molasses of apathy and the-hell-with-you-Jack.

Well, as the Americans put it, that was the way the ball bounced and the cookie crumbled. Either you've got what it takes, or you haven't.

Fine words, Yanks. Wait until you've found out what it feels like to realize that you've no longer got it. And that, heaven help you, you don't give much of a damn. Because you're simply too tired to care any more.

Rough on John, this, George Butt was thinking. Must feel something like the last Roman proconsul when the Tenth Legion shipped out for home as that Empire dwindled away. John would have been one of the best, too, if they'd been able to give him a chance. A good man for a Norman, too. Guillaume Bery les Mains had come over with William of Normandy in 1066, and had, quite possibly, clobbered some nameless Butt Saxon peasant at Hastings.

He's had everything I haven't had, George Butt pondered, and now it's showing, all those years at Winchester, and then New College: "Manners Makyth Man." Grace under pressure—wasn't that

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how Ernest Hemingway had described courage?

He'd not liked John Perryman when first they'd met: an Establishment snob who'd got his job on the strength of an ancient crest and family connections, a dilettante who'd once shocked Butt half to death by loudly rejecting, in flawless French, an inferior bottle of Chateau Neuf du Pape in a restaurant in German-occupied Paris. That was just two hours before Perryman, in a Wehrmacht *Oberst's* uniform, had got Jocklin out of the Gestapo's infamous hell hole on the Isle de la Cite with an outburst of outraged Prussian invective which had made even his aide, as played by George Butt, tremble. Once they'd got him home, and the head shrinkers had got their licks in, part of Jocklin's memory had returned and he'd been able to recite, battery for battery, the German artillery dispositions along the Baie de la Seine. He was still reciting them to this very day, in a secluded nursing home in Kent, over and over. They were the only English words he could remember.

Rough on John, Butt thought, remembering all that.

And you, George Butt—*Colonel* George Butt, he thought, watching the blue smoke swirl upward from the bowl of his pipe. Were you the last of the old ones, or the first of the new ones?

Colonel, by God! And thank God he had no occasion to wear a uniform. Evening dress with miniatures ranked across the silken lapel of his dinner coat was bad enough. Not that he went out much now, what with Gwen gone, and the children grown up. George, Junior, in research at the University of Mitch-ee-gand (the bloody Americans had another pronunciation for it), and Daff married to a New Zealander and the joyous mother of two fine boys.

But this much you know, George Butt, he told himself. Given the chance, you and John Perryman wouldn't have let the side down.

The side. What there was left of it.

The Guards still wore busbies. The Horse Guards still wore their cuirasses as they paced the arcades below, or silently sat their horses by the arches. But the *Queen Mary* was a floating hotel out on the California coast, and the *Vanguard* was probably reincarnated in a million Mini-Morrises and Cortinas.

Perryman Manor was a boys' school these days, and High Down Farm, where George Butt had been born into another world, was an agricultural experimentation station.

But before it had been Perryman Manor it had been a Franciscan monastery. And before it had been High Down Farm it had been a Saxon fort.

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Things continued. Chapter followed on chapter. What was good and decent somehow managed to survive, in one form or another.

When the need came again, if it ever did, what he and John Perryman had left behind would be of value to this island realm. There was satisfaction enough in that.

Miss Shaw-Jones knocked and entered, followed by a tall crag-faced man in civilian clothes of unmistakably American cut who came forward, hand out-stretched. Butt arose from his chair.

"Welcome to the wake, Steve," Perryman said dryly.

"John, George. Hell of a time to come calling, but I thought you'd both want to know that the files arrived in good order. By God, John, we knew they were good, but we didn't know how good."

"We endeavor to give satisfaction, Colonel," Perryman replied. "I rather thought they might surprise you."

Colonel Stephen Linder shook his head in admiration. "Your Central Europe analyses have our people climbing the wall. That tip on the Czech business alone was worth its weight in gold."

"Let's see," Butt murmured, "that would have been Alan Watson. He was our man in Prague. Damned good, too—one of our best. Pig farming in Essex now, in case you ever want to have a chat with him. Goes by the name of Hargreave these days. Quite wise, of course." Linder nodded understanding.

"I don't suppose either of you has reconsidered our offer," Linder said. "GS-17 is not a bad rating, you know, and, of course, it wouldn't mean moving out to the States unless you wanted to. You'll have to take out citizenship papers, but that's only a formality."

"It's damned generous of you, Steve, but I'm afraid George and I are a bit long in the tooth to learn new methods," Perryman answered.

"Well, then, on a consultant basis? A flat fee for each job?" Linder persisted.

"My dear Steve, there's no need for any such arrangement. As Civil Servants, George and I will always be immediately available for consultations under the various agreements between our two countries, although—" Perryman paused— "I should imagine our services should become increasingly less valuable with the passage of time and events."

"Well, if you ever change your minds, let me know."

"Persistent devil," Butt chuckled when the C.I.A. station chief for London had left with a parting handshake.

"But sound," Perryman said. "Quite unflappable for a Yank."

Miss Shaw-Jones brought tea in

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the silver service which had been a part of the office's appurtenances since 1816, when colonel Sir Vivyan Fyfe had assumed the office Perryman was about to relinquish. Each piece bore the engraved Great Seal of the United States of America. (As a Major, Sir Vivyan had been present at the capture of Washington.) In the outer office, by Miss Shaw-Jones' desk, stood the stout wooden crate in which it would be packed for delivery the next day to the United States Embassy in Grosvenor Square, together with an explanatory letter. In a few weeks, Perryman reflected, it would probably be reposing in a glass case in the Smithsonian. The exquisite Indian china cups and saucers dated from the earliest days of the East India Company, as did the magnificent rug on the floor, the gift of the Maharajah of Jaipur. The great teak desk on which the tea tray sat had once adorned the Captain's Day Cabin of the 76-gun ship-of-the-line *Resolution*.

The office, George Butt reflected, taking a sip of tea, was by way of being a capsule history of the British Empire, and maybe it was entirely fitting that it should now become the home of a typing pool, full of chattering little typists doing the inconsequential work of minor bureaucrats. The latest chapter.

This was inevitable, of course, and they'd known it as far back as the early 50's, when the fund cutting started. Of what use was the material they gathered? More and more, the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force were able to do less and less, so what did it matter that the Czechs had developed a radically new type of ram-jet engine? That the Russians were improving their ground-to-air missiles? That there was increasing unrest on the Afghan border, and that the natives in the Sudan were restless? Who cared? It was no longer Great Britain's concern. Let the Americans worry about it.

Butt's musings were interrupted by the arrival of Major General Evgeny Korassovsky who was dressed, like the American Linder, in civilian clothes. The General's broad Slavic face wore a rueful expression as he came into the room.

"Sir John, Colonel Butt." He shook hands with a bone-crushing grip. "I hope we part company as friends, gentlemen." he smiled wryly. "We have had our differences in the past, but I would like to think that we have conducted ourselves like honorable men."

"Thank you, General," Perryman replied. "Will you join us in a cup of tea?" He grinned. "Although I'm afraid it's China tea."

Korassovsky grinned in his turn. "I will permit myself a small treason. Thank you." He accepted a cup and the three men stood

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by the desk, near the front of which lay an onyx box whose lid was carved with the crest of Imperial Russia. Korassovsky recognized it and looked quizzically at Perryman.

"It was among Napoleon's effects when we shipped him off to Elba," Perryman explained. "Undoubtedly it was part of the loot from Moscow. Would you care to take it with you, General, and see that it's returned to its rightful home?"

The Russian KGB's station chief for London was genuinely moved by the gesture, and his eyes were moist as he accepted the box from Perryman's hands. "This makes doubly pleasurable what I have come to tell you," he said in a choked voice. "Lawson, Foster, and Fittshugh will arrive in Helsinki by Aeroflot tomorrow at nine in the morning. Morton was put aboard a plane in Siberia yesterday, so his arrival in Helsinki will be a trifle delayed. They are all in good health, and all their personal belongings will accompany them."

"And Dawlish?" Butt asked quietly. The Russian's face fell.

"There was a shooting involved, and the civil authorities insist that he serve another six months. In this case my own people are powerless. But he, too, is in good health, and you have my word for it that he will be returned."

"His family will be glad," Perryman said. "They're all good men."

The Russian nodded slowly. "Professionals. We made all of them offers, of course, but—" he shrugged—"they are not of Philby's type, alas. But I embarrass you, Sir John."

"We all have our Philbys, General. Probably a good thing too—keeps the rest of us on our toes."

"*Kept* us on our toes, John," Butt observed mildly.

The Russian looked at them shrewdly, appraisingly, for a long moment, then shook his head. "No," he declared, "I know it would be useless to suppose for a moment that you two—" He left the sentence unfinished. The two Englishmen smiled comprehension.

"Quite useless, General, but we are complimented," Perryman said, and the Russian nodded again. Then he too left.

"Quite a parade, eh, George?" Perryman said as the double doors closed behind Korassovsky. "I wonder who'll be next to come mourn for the corpse."

"There's one thing, John. They're not gloating. I think we can both take pride in that."

"Curious, isn't it, George? That we should be done in by our own side, so to speak. What every intelligence service in the world failed to do has been accomplished by a British computer and the Chancellor of the Exchequer."

"'Not with a bang but a whim-

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per,'" Butt quoted. A gust of wind lashed rain against the tall windows.

"General Boemann von und zu Ehrenpreisburg," Miss Shaw-Jones announced. The German was in full uniform; he was as tall as Perryman but he walked with a pronounced limp as he entered the room.

"My God, this is dreadful!" he exploded. "I flew over when I got the news. My people refused to belive it at first. Incredible!" The general's accent was pure Oxonian; he'd taken a first class at New College in '38, where he had first met John Perryman as an undergraduate. "Hullo, George. Sorry to be so upset."

"I'd say this calls for a whiskey," Butt suggested, moving toward the decanters set out on the sideboard behind Perryman's desk. A quarter of a century ago, he reflected wryly, the occasion would have called for a loaded automatic. In those prehistoric days the brilliant young Major Kurt Boemann had been head of the German intelligence network in Stockholm until it became certain that the officers' plot to kill Hitler had failed. Then he had turned himself over to the Swedish authorities and asked for asylum. The limp was the reward for his participation in the Polish campaign that had opened the war.

The West German Federal Government had found him teaching in a Lutheran Seminary when it went searching for a man capable of controlling the near-autonomous Gehlen Organization and keeping its operations in line with government foreign policies, and only a personal plea from Der Alte persuaded him to take the job.

Funny, Perryman thought, as Butt handed round the glasses, but it's so much easier to be relaxed with Kurt Boemann than with Steve Linder, when it should be just the opposite. The Old School tie, probably—shared memories of The Turf, in Hell Passage, and of climbing the ancient college walls after the gates were shut, of gala dinners at the George Cafe or the Mitre Hotel, and of lazy afternoons punting on the Isis. He remembered Boemann's getting dead drunk on the eve of his return to a Germany that the young Prussian no longer knew, but would serve as his ancestors had served.

"Tell me, John," Boemann was saying, "what ever happened to that gorgeous creature who was the undoing of Kreutzman?"

"Veronica? She married an American and went out to the States—somewhere in Ohio, I believe, where she's raised a passel of little Yanks, they tell me. And Kreutzman?"

"The dashing Captain Kreutzman?" Boemann laughed. "Can you conceive of the gallant

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Kreutzman as a portly village burgomaster, John? So help me." He looked at the two Englishmen. "And what are your plans now that—" He stopped, unhappily.

"Jamaica," Perryman replied. "The family's had a plantation out there for dogs' years, and my wife loves the idea."

"The Bahamas," George Butt announced. "I invested in a couple of acres of beachfront just after the war, and it's all free and clear now. Sea breezes, a warm climate, and Miama—

"My-amm-mee, George," Perryman corrected, grinning.

"Miami, then, and only an hour by air. I shall sit on the beach, Kurt, and think of you shivering in Berlin as I sip my tall frosty glass of rum punch."

Finally the tall German announced that it was high time for him to be leaving if he expected to be back in Berlin that same night. There was an important staff meeting in the morning to discuss the potential significance of an increase in the number of Russian hydrofoil torpedo boats in the eastern Baltic.

"Well. Damned decent of Kurt to go to so much trouble," Perryman said after their visitor had gone. "Looked a bit shaken, I must say."

"Excuse me, Sir John, Colonel Butt." It was Miss Shaw-Jones, standing in the door. "It's five o'clock, and I've promised to babysit for my niece in Chelsea, so I—" Miss Shaw-Jones' upper lip began to quiver in a most un-British fashion. "So I'll be saying goodbye, then, and—and—God bless you both."

"Thank you, Winifred," said Sir John Perryman.

"Thank you, Winifred," said Colonel George Butt.

It was the first time either of them had ever called her by her first name. And it would be the last. She was crying as she turned and left, closing the big doors softly behind her.

"Well, George, can I give you a lift? I've got the use of my official car until tomorrow morning. May as well take advantage of it, what?"

"Thanks, John, but I think I'll walk, if you don't mind. I'd like to think a bit."

"Of course," Perryman said as Butt started for his own office down the corridor to fetch his hat and coat. Miss Shaw-Jones had left for her duties beside a Chelsea crib.

Alone, Sir John Perryman, O.M., D.S.O. with two bars, took a long, final look around the office. In the marble fireplace there were only a couple of faintly glowing coals. He walked slowly to the improbable Spanish armoire that one of his predecessors had brought home from the Peninsular Campaign to serve as a clothes closet, removed his bowler and

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topcoat, and put them on before taking his umbrella. He wondered, absurdly, if they'd keep the portrait of Sam Pepys in place. Sam would have loved to stare down the bosoms of a dozen pretty young typists bent over their machines. He bowed to Sam, and walked out of the room, not closing the doors, because the room no longer held any secrets, and the charwomen would want to give it a thorough going-over before the carpenters moved in.

The rain had stopped when he got outside.

Twenty yards down the street Colonel George Butt was walking slowly, head bent. The pavement still glistened with rain.

Perryman's official sedan glided up to the curb in front of Whitehall.

"Home, sir?" the driver asked, opening the door.

"Home, please."

"Bad night, sir."

"Not the best, Harwell, by no means the best."

And that was how it was the day that British Intelligence Service ceased to exist.

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DEPARTMENT OF "FIRST STORIES"

(from the MWA Creative Writing Class)

First, a short history: the Creative Writing Class sponsored by MWA (Mystery Writers of America) was suggested by Robert Arthur, who made arrangements for the class to start at Columbia University in the fall of 1953. In the beginning the class was strictly a lecture course, under the mentorship of Dorothy Gardiner, Lawrence G. Blochman, and Harold Q. Masur. It continued to be a lecture course after moving to New York University where it remained through 1956. The next year MWA decided to have the course conducted in MWA's own office, under the revolving chairmanship of Hillary Waugh, Henry Klinger, and Richard M. Gordon. In 1965, under the guidance of Herbert Brean, the class was changed to a combined lecture course and workshop, with emphasis on the latter. (Any readers in the New York City area interested in attending the class can get full information from Mystery Writers of America Inc., Hotel Seville, 29th Street and Madison Avenue, New York City 10016.)

Now, to our Department of "First Stories": Carole Rosenthal's "Scales of Justice" is the 335th "first story" to be published by Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine, and the first story EQMM has purchased from MWA's Creative Writing Course. In the summer of 1968 Carole Rosenthal, while leafing through "Saturday Review," came upon MWA's advertisement announcing the Fall Writing Workshop.

Since she had been an "avid reader of mysteries for years," it occurred to her that she "might find an equal satisfaction in writing mysteries." She joined the class and found that equal satisfaction—which we now happily share with you.

Carole Rosenthal has been a free-lance writer, editor, publicist, and newspaper reporter; at the time of this writing she is a college English instructor. Her other interests include "art, archeology, folklore, and movies"—all prime plot sources for mystery, crime, and detective stories.

As one might expect from her work-background, her first

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story is extremely well-written—unusually so for a first appearance in print—with an impressive interlocking of plot elements, locale, and characters. Someone once formulated the theory—we think it was Vincent Starrett—that there never has been a bad mystery with a school background, that all murder stories with academic settings are of a high order of excellence. True or not, Carole Rosenthal's story reinforces that theory . . .

SCALES OF JUSTICE

by CAROLE ROSENTHAL

THE BELLS OF OLD MAIN TOLLED two o'clock. From his dining-room window J. Arthur Croycroft, Professor of English at Pearson College for the past nineteen years, could see the students, clutching their notebooks tightly, almost protectively, to their chests as they hurried through the warm September air to their first classes of the semester.

Croycroft disliked students intensely, and he liked eating enormously. As he adjusted his 300-pound bulk in the mahogany chair, he resented that he must exchange the comforts of an excellent meal for the rigors of teaching a dull class. The female students were the worst—thought they could substitute sex atpeal for intellectual initiative, most of them.

Well, let the little beggars wait and worry a bit! He had no illusions about his popularity with the students. Called hi m"Piggy" behind his back, did they? All right! But not many of them passed his course. Even as he digested his lunch he began to savor some particularly caustic lines he planned to use this year.

Suddenly his attention was captured by a young girl who ran by his window, passing almost directly under him. Her long blonde hair, not quite curly, but very thick, rippled on her back and shoulders as she ran, and she moved with the graceful urgency of a forest animal chasing its prey. She skipped over a trimmed hedge, her plaid skirt hitching up and revealing a long tawny thigh; she disappeared behind the Library Building.

Strange! He thought for a moment he recognized her, though

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he hadn't been able to see her face. But he had the feeling of having known her before—in another time, another place.

A memory twenty-five years old asserted itself, and Croycroft's lips tightened. No, it was ridiculous. He would think about pleasanter things—his dinner menu, for instance. Yes, Coquilles St. Jacques with Les Clos, to be followed by calves liver and grapes sauteed until their skins were almost bursting...

Saliva had already begun to ooze in his mouth and he was ten minutes late when he began his leisurely stroll across the campus to his class.

Even before he reached the end of the hall Croycroft heard the chatter from his classroom. Several students were talking, even laughing, when he paused deliberately in the doorway—a study in frozen hauteur—waiting until a silence encased the room. A few of the students smiled nervously, some fidgeted, one or two defiantly tried to outstare him. Naturally, they lost.

Soon every student's eyes had shifted to the asphalt-tiled floor. Then Croycroft entered the room, and with the precision of an entomologist mounting his collection, fixed his attention on one after another of the students.

His eyes, pale in the bright afternoon light, flicked along the rows. And to each person he said, in effect, in the silent language understood by students since kindergarten: "Nothing you can do will please me." Then, placing his fingertips together at the level of his chest, he began his lecture.

"Intellectual dullness," he said in a clipped voice, "is the grossest crime being committed in America. It will not be tolerated in this classroom—"

Then he stopped. Abruptly. His eyes had arrived at the far right corner of the room.

Sixth row, last seat. The same girl he had just seen under his window! Who was she? Her light green eyes were flecked with gold—animal eyes that contradicted her passive expression. A fine filigree of fear prickled on his stomach and caused him to suck in a deep breath.

Those eyes were too familiar. and that strange sliding motion of her head as she listened to him...

"Good writing is more than a mastery of simple mechanics," he continued, waving a pink hand in the air. "The arrangement of material, of illustrations, or whatever amplifications a thesis requires..."

(*A fool!* he remembered. Oh, damn his excellent memory! *She had seen him as a fat fool, prating of intellectual glories but incompetent in the world of men. She had told him so.*)

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"Any questions?" Croycroft ked. There were none and he rded himself to go on.

("You're not a man," Janet Shaw id, flinging a look of the most vful contempt over her shoulder she tossed the proffered engage- ent ring on the table. It rolled psidedly for a moment and stop- d, rocking crazily. "A phony, abby, petty, pretentious little pig. hat's you all over! And I ouldn't have you on a silver latter with an apple in your outh!"

The light in the parlor twenty- ve years ago was dim, but roycroft saw vivid red and the hite flashes, and a thousand tiny ins swelled and pulsed in his ce. He felt absolutely murderous. nd paradoxically, very weak and olish.)

And Croycroft knew who sat cing him in that classroom, atching him with those same cretly scornful eyes. After years which he had almost (but not uite) forgotten the snickers and olitely averted glances that had umiliated him into leaving town id forsaking all interest in wom- n forever, the daughter of Janet aw had returned to haunt him. nd to remind him of his failure. It was unbearable. Suddenly the echanical portion of his mind at had been delivering the lecture opped. The class sighed, as if ricken by the abrupt silence.

"I am going to call the roll," Croycroft announced, shuffling through the class cards that the Registrar had sent him.

"Anderson, Donna?"

A chunky girl in the second row raised her hand.

"Bernard, Jonathan?" A giraffe-like boy with a tufted cowlick signaled to him from the third row.

When he arrived at the name Karen Dorman, the girl in the back corner of the room looked up. The thick hair shadowed her face, and she raised her hand slowly.

Croycroft exhaled sharply. His eye skimmed down the registration card, passing quickly the sections for age, place of birth, and father's name. He stopped where it said Mother's Maiden Name: Janet Shaw.

It could not be borne. He must act!

The students shuffled their feet. Croycroft proceeded to the next card.

But *what,* he wondered, had he meant by *act?* Surely not violence—that would be too esthetically distasteful. No, he needed a punishment to fit the crime. A failure for a failure.

Croycroft jerked his head upward, and his movement caught the girl's eye. She smiled at him, revealing small white teeth and a dimple in her cheek. *She would not pass Freshman English!*

A moist answering smile broke

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across Croycroft's lips. It was so easy. So much less risky than the murder he once had wanted to commit on Janet Shaw. He congratulated himself on the tidiness of his solution, belched politely, and dismissed the class in a resonant voice.

Twelve weeks passed. Indian summer was replaced by cold rains that splashed with vindictive gusto. The final phase of Croycroft's plan against Janet Shaw was about to go into effect.

In front of Croycroft, on his oak desk, were stacked the final research papers of his freshman students. These papers represented one-half of their grade in the course. When the daughter of Janet Shaw received her F on the final project—just as she had been receiving F's all along—a debt of twenty-five years would be repaid. The scales of justice would be balanced at last.

Frankly, he looked forward to getting rid of the girl. Although she never spoke in class, her presence was a mockery to him. If Janet Shaw had rejected the chance to elevate her mind through marriage to him, why should her daughter have the opportunity?

And the girl was a personal nuisance as well. She was a Home Economics major, and not a week had gone by that she hadn't brought a cooking project to class with her. The rich aroma of freshly cooked food wafting under his nostrils as he fought to keep his mind on metaphors and similes had a peculiar effect on Croycroft. He found himself swaying toward a sensuously frosted chocolate cake. His syntax slid away and his sentences stopped short when his eyes fastened on Beef Stroganoff in the glass-covered dish. And the fresh croissants, the banana-nut bread—all tempted him, tantalized him, seduced his attention away from the incredibly dull task of motivating the freshman mind.

But, since he could hardly *ask* for a taste, and since she had never offered him one, he resented it. Then, too, the classes seemed restless, rowdier than in past years. It must be because of his preoccupation with the girl, and all the memories she stirred in him.

But it would be finished soon. In three weeks he would begin a new semester, perhaps even a new phase in his life. He would intimidate new students and watch their initial expressions of eagerness stiffen into mute terror as he enforced his academic disciplines. Just knowing that he was getting even with Janet Shaw made him feel good. A clean slate—

The phone near his elbow rang, interrupting his euphoria, and the Dean's dry old voice rasped across the receiver at him.

"I just had a student in here, Arthur—a very sweet girl, too

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—who showed me a group of papers you marked F. They didn't seem like F's to me, though. I looked them over carefully, and I told her we would drop those grades and start fresh. That may seem presumptuous of me, Arthur, but I couldn't see why you graded those papers that low. I think you should pass her unless she fails the research paper."

After an almost imperceptible hesitation Croycroft asked, "Who was the student?" He slapped his fist silently against his thigh when the Dean told him.

"Yes," he said. "Well, I already have her research paper... No, I understand your point of view. After all, I don't claim infallibility. I'll look through them again and see what I can do." He hung up the phone.

The damnable girl! Twisting the Dean around her finger. He should have expected as much out of any daughter of Janet Shaw.

He should be worried. Yes, he knew he *should* be worried—the Dean's intervention could be a fatal obstacle to his plan—but somehow he wasn't. His euphoria made him feel light, despite his bulk, and somehow invincible. His intellect had never failed him. This problem could be solved, too.

Twenty minutes later, after leafing through the pile of research papers and finding the one he sought, Croycroft had the answer. And luck, rather than intellect, provided for him. The daughter of Janet Shaw, true to the devious patterns of her heredity, had plagiarized her term paper!

Whole passages in the paper, which was entitled *Bacteria and Toxins Occurring Naturally in Foods,* had been copied, verbatim, without any footnoting at all. The lack of footnotes, together with the professional flourishes in the writing, had alerted him immediately. Perhaps she had plagiarized inadvertently, through carelessness. Perhaps deliberately, out of desperation. But in either case, plainly a failing paper and even the Dean would have to agree.

Well, Croycroft thought, it served her right to fail just for picking such a disagreeable topic to begin with. Toxins in food! It was enough to turn the stomach.

But despite having just read of salmonella and botulism epidemics, Croycroft's stomach was growling with hunger as he scrawled a hasty *F—PLAGIARISM* in red letters on the paper. It was lunchtime, he realized, glancing upward at his ormolu clock. Turbot with hollandaise sauce. He rose to his full five foot seven, patted his belly as he stretched, smiled at himself in the mirror, and hurried downstairs to his meal.

"Honestly, Dr. Croycroft," the girl was saying, "I know you're right, and I know I never should have done it. But, you see, I was desperate. I didn't think I had

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a chance to pass the course any other way."

The girl was almost in tears, her wide eyes purple-lidded and downcast. Her hands, held firmly in her lap, whitened at the knuckles. It was the first time Croycroft had heard her speak, and her voice, though quivering, had a crystalline quality that cut gracefully through the winter dampness in his office.

"You see," she was saying, "no matter how hard I tried, no matter how much work I put in, you always failed me. I thought maybe you had something against *me* personally. I just didn't know what to do."

Croycroft regarded the girl silently, drumming his fingertips on the top of his desk. He had expected her to deny plagiarizing the paper. When she had first knocked timidly at the office door, carrying her textbooks and another of her infernal cooking projects (a fish pie, judging by the aroma) precariously balanced in her arms, Croycroft had settled his buttocks back in the leather chair and looked forward to the battle. He would use his most savage witticisms on her. He would sabotage her arguments with obscure quotations. And flinging the scorn of Janet Shaw, transformed into retribution, back at the girl, he would watch her crumble.

In his brief case he had library books that *proved* she had copied the paper. He had been unprepared for immediate confession and apology.

"I stole parts of the paper because I wanted to impress you."

She pushed her books and the fish pie to a corner of the desk and fixed her gaze unhappily on her fingers. Her nails, Croycroft noticed, were ragged and bitten, giving an awkward, childish look to the tapering fingers.

"I didn't want you to think I was stupid, and I did so much want to pass."

"Why should I think you were stupid?" Croycroft picked up. "I don't make up my mind in a vacuum." Actually, the parsley-and-thyme odor of the fish pie was distracting him. He spoke to keep his attention riveted on the girl.

"So many people think it doesn't take any brains to be in Home Economics," the girl said. "They think it's just a mickey-mouse course and you can slide through—"

"And actually?" Croycroft said. He thought he smelled a pinch of majoram, too.

The girl bent forward eagerly, and her face seemed momentarily to clear. "That's just it," she said. "Very few people realize that there are two separate areas of Home Economics. Home Management and Food Technology. I'm in Food Tech, which requires taking all kinds of advanced science courses.

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In fact," she continued, unfolding her hands and making a fluttering gesture of enthusiasm, "it was my bacteriology course that gave me the idea for the paper. I knew the sources—"

"So you thought you'd make ample use of them. Correct?"

She caught her lip for a moment, then nodded her head. "I'm sorry. I really am." Her voice, very tiny, as if squeezing out from the back of her throat, said, "Do you think I could possibly have one more chance? I know it's asking a lot."

Croycroft was weakening. A faint thrust of remorse pushed at his resolution, shoving aside the image of Janet Shaw. He clutched for it. Janet Shaw. Yes, think Janet Shaw. Think of the litany of insults she once hurled at you. Fish pie. *Don't* think fish pie. Think Janet Shaw. If only she would offer him a piece, even a taste. But she didn't. Yet he was struck by the wounded stillness with which the girl held her body as she waited for his answer.

Twenty-five years was a long time to owe a debt of vengeance. He pursed his lips and leaned back in the chair.

"It's not just me I'm thinking about," the girl said finally, breaking the long silence with her tremulous voice. "You see, if I flunk English I don't think my father will let me come back next semester. He doesn't believe in college for women. But my mother is very ambitious for me, and if I fail English it will probably just *kill* her."

"I daresay you are exaggerating," Croycroft said, pulling his lips tight against his teeth. His resolve was stiffening.

"No, not really," the girl answered. "She's a wonderful person—very determined and really quite intelligent—but I guess she transferred a lot of her ambitions to me. She always wanted an education for herself, and said she knew some pretty big fools who were running around impressing people."

Croycroft said nothing. At the moment he didn't dare.

"It would probably hurt her more than it would hurt me," the girl said. "But I'm sure I could do the work if you'd give me another chance." She paused hopefully. "Will you?"

(*"I have more common sense in my little finger than you have in your whole big fat body," Janet Shaw said shrilly, her voice rising. "And I want you to get out of my life. Do you hear me? Get out!" And Croycroft backed toward the parlor door.*)

Now he rose in his chair.

"Will I what?" he asked. He felt the veins thickening in his neck. "Will I *what?*"

The girl's narrow face paled under his cold voice, which rose above hers as she started to speak.

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"Dear girl," Croycroft said, "you are a failure. You have plagiarized a paper. You have *tried* to trick me. Leave this office at once. *Get out!* Go home to your mother! You may be able to wheedle your way around the Dean, but he will apologize to me when I expose you. He would pass you, because you tricked him. I will not! At the end of three weeks I am turning in your grade, and you are *not* passing—"

Suddenly she jumped up from the chair and ran to the door. Her face, when she turned it toward him, stopped his words.

"But I tried to reason with you," she said. "I *have* to pass English."

Then, bursting into tears, she retreated down the steps, her sobs echoing in the long halls.

Croycroft was shaking when he sat down again, and it was several minutes before the blood stopped pounding in his face. So sudden. So violent. He had not expected his outburst. He felt as if he could have murdered the girl. Perhaps he would have had she not left so quickly. He held his throbbing head in his hands.

Gradually he recovered and began to wonder if he had made a fool of himself. So emotional. What if she told the Dean? But what could she say? That he had yelled at her? It was so unlike him that the Dean wouldn't believe it.

An incisive headache pulsed behind his left temple. Perhaps she would return for her books. And he would show her that he was in control—had never lost it, really.

He turned the incident over in his mind, waiting for her return, his eyes fixed on her textbooks and on the cooking project. But she didn't come back. And finally he realized that she wasn't going to. He removed a sizable hunk of the pie and swallowing it (he had been right about the majoram) resolved to stop thinking about the matter. He was ready for dinner.

But two days later Croycroft still felt nervous about the girl. He had awakened to a splitting headache, and his stomach had tightened to the point of nausea, causing a persistent weak and cramped feeling that weighed on his entire body. Why couldn't he forget the incident? What was it about her that haunted him and tied his nerves together like a fishnet?

Perhaps he had been too harsh. It wasn't too late. He hadn't sent the grades in yet. But another part of his mind was suffused with relief, and he knew he would follow through on his original plan. In a strange way, despite the gastric attack and his throbbing head, he felt cured rather than ill. Twenty-five years, after all. A long time for revenge.

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In fact, he decided as he lay in bed, why put up with the indignity of physical discomfort at all? If his mind held fast to the encounter, at least his body could be at ease. Why not get some medicine from the doctor to make him feel better?

When he put through the call to the doctor's office, the nurse answered in a breezy, condescending voice.

"There's a lot of flu going around," she said, "but the best thing when you have these symptoms is to just stay in bed and let nature take its course. Anyway, the doctor has a busy schedule today." But Croycroft triumphed over her syrupy objections and achieved an immediate appointment.

On his way out Croycroft stopped at his mailbox and stuffed several unopened envelopes into his brief case, then hurried along the nearly empty winter streets. A severe chill made him shiver as he walked, and he wondered if it was the bitterness of the day, or if he had a new nervous symptom.

"The doctor will be with you in a few minutes," the nurse said, baring her teeth in a wide grin and motioning him to the sofa. "Just make yourself comfortable."

Croycroft seated himself, glanced at the number of people in the waiting room, and decided that the few minutes could easily turn into an hour. Spreading his feet in front of him on a green hassock, he removed the unopened mail from his brief case and began reading it.

Several advertising brochures and a copy of *Literary Reviews*. But he wasn't up to scholarly reading at the moment. He tore open another envelope. A manuscript of some sort. What on earth? It was a research paper—the same research paper he had returned to the daughter of Janet Shaw.

He shook his head impatiently. Did she really think she could coerce him into changing his mind by resubmitting the paper? His eyes skimmed down the paper.

"...the salmonella organism is commonly found in foods which..."

Yes, it was the same paper. She hadn't even changed a word. But, he saw, she had marked certain sections in ballpoint asterisks. Now what was she up to?

"...more virulent, however, is the botulism bacteria. Certain strains are invariably fatal. Since it is possible to isolate the botulism culture and contaminate other foods with it, its use has been explored for possibilities in germ warfare. In fact, it has been said that one teaspoon of this deadly organism would wipe out the entire population of New York if placed in the central water supply..."

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A very morbid subject, Croycroft decided. Even if she was taking a bacteriology course, Croycroft felt there was something obsessive about her interest in food toxins. And why she was resubmitting the same paper to him?

"... the symptoms, which manifest themselves within fourteen to twenty-four hours after eating the food contaminated by botulism, include nausea, intense headaches, severe chills, and ..."

Wait a minute! Croycroft tugged at his cheek with a nervous hand. What did it say?

"... the botulism culture is found in beef, beans, and fish ..."

No! He thought back to the final interview. What had the girl said? "But I tried to reason with you!" What had she meant?

He turned back a page. "Certain strains are invariably fatal. Since it is possible to isolate the botulism culture and contaminate other foods with it ..."

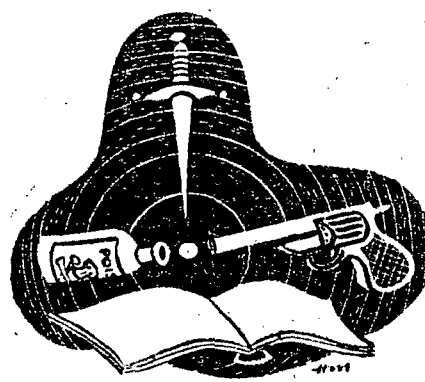
The nurse was pulling on his shoulder. "Dr. Croycroft," she was saying indignantly, "you're keeping the doctor waiting."

Croycroft's eyes fastened on the next sentence. "... one teaspoon of this deadly organism could wipe out ..." No!

"You're keeping the doctor waiting," the nurse repeated.

The term paper fluttered from Croycroft's hand.

"Why, Dr. Croycroft," the nurse said. "You really don't look at all well!"



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Like Carole Rosenthal, Martin L. Keen saw an advertisement for MWA's course in mystery-story writing and enrolled ...

Mr. Keen, a native of New Jersey, has been a plant control chemist and a biochemist. After four years in the Army (WWII) he decided to change careers—to become a writer. He began as a trade-journal reporter, wrote some westerns and science fiction, and has been a free-lance consultant and staff member for various publishers. Since 1960 he has had more than 20 junior science books, including textbooks, published. He joined the MWA Workshop to "seek variety from juvenile science writing."

His first mystery story is deceptive—not in its mystery but in its possible intent. On the surface it sounds like merely a humorous story; but it has an odd, offbeat, almost Absurd (with the capital) quality. And it could be interpreted—if you wish to do so—as having serious and important overtones ...

THE BOMB

by MARTIN L. KEEN

GRANDMA SILLS HUMMED SOFTLY as she worked in the basement of her home. Using a screwdriver she pried the crystal off a small alarm clock. Then she pulled the minute hand off the clock. She twisted a short length of stiff wire around the small crank by which the clock's alarm spring was wound. With a penknife she expertly scraped the insulation off the ends of the wire, then led one-half of the wire up and over the top of the clock and bent the wire's bare end against the clock's face so that the hour hand would strike the wire at exactly one o'clock.

"And what does the recipe call for next?" Grandma Sills asked herself. "Add one fresh electric battery to one crisp detonator and connect well." Having made the connections she went on, "And last, add one plump stick of dynamite."

She carefully secured the dynamite to the detonator with several rubber bands, saying, "Easy does it, old gal. You're not

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handling a stick of celery."

Looking at the watch which hung from her neck by a gold chain, she set the hour hand of the clock. Then she wound up the clock tightly.

She began to hum again as she surveyed her work with satisfaction. After a moment she put some tissue paper into the bottom of a gay pink-and-silver-striped cardboard gift box. She carefully placed the clock and dynamite into the box and surrounded her explosive device with more tissue paper. Putting the top on, she wrapped an apple-green ribbon around the box and attached a ribbon sunburst. Finally she slipped under the ribbon a card on which she written: *To Grandma Millie Jones From Amanda Sills.* The writing on the card was framed by a choir of printed angels. Grandma Sills thought the angels were such a nice touch.

Grandma Sills, alert and full of life for all her 73 years, had not been sharp enough to see a pair of bright blue eyes watching her through a basement window. As she picked up the box and walked toward the stairs, the eyes disappeared from the window.

Upstairs, she went to the kitchen door and called, "Joey! Joey! Where are you?" There followed a light thumping of sneaker-shod feet, and a small golden-haired boy rocketed around the corner of the house.

"Land's sake, Joey," Grandma Sills said, a twinkle in her kindly old eyes, "you run fast for a ten-year-old boy, I declare."

"Uh-uh, buttering me up. What do you want me to do for you, Granny?"

"Land's sake, Joey, you're the most suspicious boy I ever saw, I declare."

"Why do you always say, 'Land's sake, I declare'? What does it mean, Granny?"

"Why . . . land's sake, I declare I don't know, Joey. The things you ask, boy!"

How about something to eat?"

"I declare you can read my mind, child. I was just going to ask you if you'd like some ginger cookies and milk. And then I was going to ask you to run a little errand for me."

"I knew there was a catch somewhere. Okay, Granny, make it peanut butter and jelly on white bread and I declare you've got yourself an errand boy."

When Joey had finished his snack, Grandma Sills handed him the pink-and-silver box and said, "I want you to take this over to your Grandma Jones. Here's the bus fare. Now, don't dawdle on the way. I want your Grandma to have this present before one o'clock. Do you understand, boy?"

As she watched Joey walk down the street, Grandma Sills's eyes grew dim with love for her grandson.

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A block down the street Joey greeted Officer Pete Barnhart and was asked, "What have you got in that pretty box?"

"It's a dynamite bomb. My Grandmother Sills is sending it to my Grandmother Jones."

For a second Officer Barnhart's face clouded over. Then he guffawed loudly and said, "What'll you think up next, Joey? For a minute there, you had me scared."

"No need to be scared, Mr. Barnhart. The bomb isn't set to go off until one o'clock. There's plenty of time."

"Get along with you, Joey!"

When Joey reached the bus stop he sat down on the curb. After a minute he looked at his wrist watch. He jumped up and hurried back the way he had come.

As he approached Officer Barnhart, Joey announced, "I forgot something."

"Bet you did. Probably your atomic bomb," the policeman said, poking Joey gently in the ribs with his club.

"Police brutality!" Joey cried.

When he reached home he bounded onto the porch where Grandma Sills sat in her rocking chair daydreaming and working on an embroidery of Batman. When she became aware of Joey she said, "Land's sake, what are you doing here, child? I told you to hurry with that present for your Grandma Jones. Now, you get along!"

"I came back to find out what time it is," Joey said unhurriedly. And he walked up to his grandmother, grasped the watch hanging around her neck, and looked at it closely. "Twelve-o-six and fifty seconds," he said. "Add ten seconds for good luck." He set his wrist watch at 12:07, waved goodbye, and was on his way to the bus again.

When Joey was half a block from the bus stop he saw the bus zip by. He shrugged and looked at his watch. It was 12:13. He quickened his pace as he began to walk to the transfer point where the bus would have carried him. He had to run the last block to catch the bus that would take him close to Grandma Jones's house.

The bus was crowded, but a woman seeing Joey standing, picked up her infant boy from a seat, and put the child in her lap. With a "Thank you, ma'm," Joey took the seat vacated for him. He put the gift box on his lap and folded his hands over it.

The woman beamed at him and said, "What do you have in that pretty box—a birthday present for your mommy?"

"No, ma'm," said Joey, "a dynamite bomb."

The woman giggled and said, "What a thing to say! Where did you learn to talk like that?"

"From my Grandma Sills. She says, 'Land's sake, Joey, I declare

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you must always tell the truth'."

The woman giggled again and asked, "Where did you get the bomb?"

"My Grandma Sills gave it to me."

"I guess she made the bomb, too, didn't she?"

"That's right, ma'm."

The woman laughed again. The infant began to pull at the ribbon on the box. His mother, her attention caught by something outside the bus, told him in a absent-minded manner to stop. The baby kept tugging at the ribbon. Joey pinched the infant's thigh and quickly refolded his hands on the box. The baby let go of the ribbon and howled. The mother began to search inside the baby's plastic underpants for an open diaper pin or some other cause of pain. The baby stopped crying and the woman again turned to Joey.

Seeing the card on the box she asked, "Who is Grandma Millie Jones?"

"She's my other grandma."

"Oh, I see," the woman said. "One of your grandmothers is sending your other grandmother a bomb in a gift box tied with a pretty ribbon. How sweet." And she laughed gleefully.

"That's right, ma'm."

"Well," the woman continued, "if you have a bomb in that box, why have you brought it on a bus where it could go off and hurt so many people?"

"Oh, it's safe. I'm getting off the bus at the next stop, and the bomb won't go off for twenty minutes yet. You want to hear it ticking?"

Joey lifted the box and the woman put her ear to it. Her eyes grew wide with surprise and sudden fear. She opened her mouth to scream, but Joey had stood up and was saying, "Thank you for the seat, ma'm. Goodbye." The woman, realizing how foolish she would sound if she screamed that a little boy had a bomb in a ribbon-tied gift box, closed her mouth without a sound.

As Joey walked up the aisle to the front of the bus, he held the box high in front of him and said smilingly to passengers who looked his way, "Bomb, anyone?"

Grandma Jones's house was only a block from the bus stop, and Joey was soon ringing the doorbell. When she opened the door she gave a cry of delight, kissed her grandson, and said, "Come in and sit down and I'll get you some ginger cookies and milk."

Under his breath Joey said, "Land's sake, the whole world seems to be full of ginger cookies and milk, I declare," and then aloud, "Make that a peanut butter and jelly sandwich and some orange soda, and I'm your man, Granny."

When the food was set before Joey and he had sampled it, he

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said, pointing to the box, "I brought you a present from Grandma Sills."

Immediately Grandma Jones became wary. "What did that old witch send me?"

Joey had to chew a rather large mouthful and wash it down before he could answer, "A dynamite bomb."

"A dynamite bomb!" Grandma Jones said. "Now that's going too far."

"I don't think," Joey said, "she liked the rattlesnake you sent her in that muff last week."

"That woman never had any judgment," Grandma Jones fumed. "A dynamite bomb, indeed!"

"It's set to go off at one o'clock, Granny. Eight more minutes."

Grandma Jones went to the telephone and dialed furiously. When her call was answered, she launched into a bitter harangue, which began, "Amanda Sills, you brainless—" She talked and talked, and Grandma Sills talked and talked back.

Joey tapped his grandmother's shoulder. "Four minutes," he announced. Grandma Jones took no notice.

Joey picked up some crumbs, licked jelly off his fingers, and drank the last of the soda. "Three minutes," he said.

Grandma Jones stopped talking abruptly. "Amanda hung up on me," she sputtered. "That no-good grandmother of yours." She set her jaw in anger and stared straight ahead, silent.

"The bomb, Granny. One minute."

"Oh, yes the bomb," Grandma Jones said. She deftly untied the ribbon, opened the box, and removed the tissue paper on top. The hour hand was a hair's breadth from the trigger wire, but Grandma Jones bent the wire away from the hand and down to the numeral 2. "Now it's set for two o'clock," she said.

"Nice work, Granny."

"Now, I want you to take this box back to your Grandma Sills. Here's the bus fare. And don't dawdle on the way, son."

"All right," Joey said. "But this is the last trip. I got better things to do on a Saturday afternoon than carry a dynamite bomb back and forth between two feuding old Grannies."

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NEW

first Inspector Ghote short story by

H. R. F. KEATING

Inspector Ghote (pronounced Go-tay) is the protagonist of H. R. F. Keating's detective-crime novels. The very first one, THE PERFECT MURDER *(1964), won the English Critics' Award for that year. The four Ghote novels published so far have been acclaimed by reviewers on both sides of the Atlantic. Julian Symons has called Inspector Ghote "a fine comic character," and "The Sun" agreed by calling "the wide-eyed, slightly preposterous but ever-dignified Inspector Ghote (Bombay C.I.D.) one of the best comic detectives ever invented." And Francis Iles wrote: "Those who have met Ghote before will know what kind of attractive fare to expect: those who have not should hasten to do so."*

Well, obviously it is always better to meet a fictional detective in a full-length work (there are exceptions, of course—notably Sherlock Holmes); a novel has many advantages over a short story in establishing an enduring reader-character friendship. Since it is impossible for us, within our space limitations, to give you Ghote in complete-novel length, we now do the next best thing in our power—give you the first Ghote short story, really a short-short, that combines a glimpse of Bombay during the Cricket Test Match (comparable to our baseball World Series) and a glimpse of Inspector Ghote's professional mind clicking at all times ... Mr. Keating never strays far from the human heart and even its smallest problems ...

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INSPECTOR GHOTE AND THE TEST MATCH

by H. R. F. KEATING

FROM THE VERY BEGINNING INspector Ghote had doubts about Anil Divekar and the Test Match. Cricket and Divekar did not really mix. Divekar's sport was something quite different. He was a daylight-entry ace. Excitement for him lay not in perfectly timing a stroke with the bat that would send the ball skimming along the grass to the boundary, but in the patient sizing up, "casing," of big Bombay house—the layout of its rooms, the routine of its servants—and then choosing the right moment to slip in and out carrying away the best of the portable loot.

But here he was, as Ghote on a rare free day stood with his son Ved outside the high walls of Brabourne Stadium, ticketless and enviously watching the crowds pouring in for the start of the day's play. Divekar even came up to them, smiling broadly.

"Inspector, you would like seats?"

At Ghote's elbow Ved's face lit up as if from a sudden inward glow. And Ghote nearly accepted the offer. Ved deserved the treat—he was well-behaved and worked hard at school. And it was only a question of a pair of tickets. Some of the Inspector's colleagues would have taken them as a right.

But Ghote knew all along that he couldn't do it. Whatever the others did he had always kept his integrity. No crook could ever reproach him with past favors.

He tugged Ved angrily off. But marching away from the stadium he could not help speculating as to why Divekar should have been there at all. Of course, when every two years or so a team from England or Australia or the West Indies came to Bombay, Test Match fever suddenly gripped the most unexpected people. But all the same...

Yet the crowd outside the stadium had not all been the college students and excited schoolboys you might expect. Smart business executives had jostled with simple shopkeepers and grain merchants. The film stars' huge cars had nosed their way past anxious, basket-clutching housewives, their best saris already looking crumpled and dusty.

Fifty thousand people, ready to roast all day in the sun to watch

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a sedate game that most of them hardly understood! Waiting for someone to "hit a sixer" so that they could launch into frenzied clapping, or for someone to drop a catch and give them a chance to indulge in some vigorous booing, or—the height of heights!—for a home player to get a century and permit them to invade the pitch with flower garlands held high to drape their hero.

Where did they all get the entrance money? Ghote wondered. With even eighteen-rupee seats selling for a hundred, getting in was way beyond his own means. Little Ved's treat would have to be, once more, a visit to the Hanging Gardens.

But when they reached this mildly pleasurable, and free, spot, everywhere they went transistor radios were tuned teasingly to the Test Match commentary, and nothing Ghote offered his son was in the least successful.

He bought coconuts, but Ved would not even watch the squatting naralwallah dexterously chop off the tops of the dark fruit. He held out the gruesome spectacle of the vultures that hovered over the Towers of Silence where the Parsis laid out their dead, but Ved just shrugged. Ghote purchased various bottled drinks, each more hectically colored and more expensive than the previous one; but Ved drank them with increased apathy.

At last Ghote gave up in a spasm of irritation.

"If that is all you care, we will go home."

Ved made no reply.

They set off, Ghote walking fast and getting unnecessarily hot. And still, going down Malabar Hill with its huge garden-surrounded mansions and great shady trees, there were passers-by with transistors and the unwearying commentator's voice.

"What a pity for India. A glorious captain's knock by the Rajah of Bolkpur ends in a doubtful decision by Umpire Khan."

Ved swung round on him with an outraged glare. Whether this was because of the umpire's perfidy or because of not being there to judge the matter for himself it was hard to tell.

And then Ghote saw him. Anil Divekar. At least the figure that he half glimpsed ahead, sneaking out of a narrow gate and cradling in his arms a heavy-looking, sack-wrapped object, looked remarkably like Divekar. Ghote launched himself into the chase.

But the sound of running steps alerted the distant figure and in moments the fellow had disappeared altogether.

Ghote went quickly back to the house from whose side entrance he had seen the suspicious figure emerge. And there things began to add up. The big house had

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been rented temporarily to none other than the Rajah of Bolkpur himself and a few minutes' search revealed that all the Rajah's personal jewelry had just been neatly spirited away.

Ghote got through to C.I.D. Headquarters on the telephone and reported. Then he and Ved endured a long wait till a squad arrived to take over. But he did get away in time to go down to the stadium again to see if Ved, his autograph book ready, could catch a glimpse of the departing players.

And no sooner had they arrived at the stadium, just as the crowds were beginning to stream out, when there was Anil Divekar right in front of them. He made no attempt to run. On the contrary he came pushing his way through the throng, smiling broadly.

No doubt he thought he had fixed himself a neat alibi. But Ghote saw in a flash how he could trap Divekar if he had slipped away from the game just long enough to commit the robbery. Because it so happened that Ghote knew exactly what had been occurring in the stadium at the moment the thief had slipped out of that house on Malabar Hill.

"A bad day's play, I hear," he said to Divekar. "What did you think about Bolkpur?"

Divekar shook his head sadly. "A damn wrong decision, Inspectorji," he said. "I was sitting right behind the bat, and I could see. Damn wrong."

He looked at them both with an expression of radiant guiltlessness. "That was where you would have been sitting also," Divekar added.

You win, Ghote thought and turned grimly away. But on his way home he stopped for a moment at Headquarters to see if anything had turned up. His Deputy Superintendent was there.

"Well, Inspector, they tell me you spotted Anil Divekar leaving the house."

"I am sorry, sir, but I do not think it was him now."

He recounted his meeting with the man at the stadium a few minutes earlier. But the Deputy Superintendent was unimpressed.

"Nonsense, man, whatever the fellow says, this is Divekar's type of crime, one hundred percent. You just identify him as running off from the scene and we've got him."

For an instant Ghote was tempted. After all, Divekar was an inveterate thief: it would be justice of a sort. But then he knew that he had not really been sure who that running man was.

"No, sir," he said. "I am sorry, but no."

The Deputy Superindent's eyes blazed, and it was only the insistent ringing of the telephone by his side that postponed his moment of wrath.

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"Yes? Yes? What is it? Oh, you, Inspector. Well? What? The gardener? But —oh. On him? Every missing item? Very good then, charge him at once."

He replaced the receiver and looked at Ghote.

"Yes, Inspector," he said blandly, "that chap Divekar. As I was saying, he wants watching, you know, close watching. I'll swear he's up to something. Now, he's bound to be at the Test Match tomorrow, so you'd better be there too."

"Yes, sir," Ghote said.

A notion darted into Ghote's head.

"And, sir. For cover for the operation should I take this boy of mine also?"

"First-rate idea. Carry on, Inspector Ghote."

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A. H. Z. Carr's First Prize Winner of 1955 has not lost, with the passing of the years, one atom of its profoundly disturbing quality, or one atom of its timeliness; quite the contrary, although the story was written 14 years ago, its implications are even more timely today. The story has actually grown in contemporary urgency...

When Mr. Carr asked some of his closest friends to read the manuscript 14 years ago, he was startled at the intensity of their reactions; the story seemed to cause a great deal of "inner turbulence" in everyone who read it, and that was nearly a decade and a half ago... and many things have happened since then which today would surely intensify that "inner turbulence." For, of course, *The Black Kitten* can now be read, as it should have been then, on more than one level of understanding ...

THE BLACK KITTEN

by A. H. Z. CARR

THE REVEREND DR. WALTER SLOANE sat in the little book-crammed room that he called his study, composing a sermon on Religion and the Fight Against Crime. The process of creation was not aided by his seven-year-old daughter Ellen, who was tramping up the stairs of the house sounding like a regiment, and calling, "Little Black Sambo! Here, Little Black Sambo!" Her adored kitten was lost regularly several times a day—one of Elly's dark schemes, he suspected, for creating a small but noisy crisis to compel his attention.

He knew where the tiny thing was—somewhere in the study; he had heard its plaintive mew a little while before. To open the door and invite Elly in to find the kitten, as she expected, would utterly derail his train of thought, so he decided to finish at least the paragraph he was working on before capitulating.

"Sambo-scrambo!" yelled Elly in the corridor. Her father smiled and winced at the same time—a com-

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plicated facial gesture that summed up his feelings of the moment about Elly. After a while Elly galloped away, miaowing lustily. "We must recognize," he wrote, "that the police are a punitive, not a preventive, force in the fight against crime. We cannot expect them to assume the whole burden of..."

He reached for his stubby briar pipe, which had gone out, debated for an instant whether to go through the ritual of emptying, cleaning, filling, lighting, and tamping, and compromised by putting a match to what tobacco remained in the bowl; but the first whiff was acrid, and before laying it aside he looked at the pipe as if it had betrayed him. Taking up the pen, he wrote down some words: "Throughout history, there has been only one power..."

"Little Black Sambo is a dambo!" Elly, who herself had the wide-eyed willfulness of a spoiled kitten, would often bring the syllable "dam" into her soliloquies; she had learned that it made adults look at her. He focused on the slow sentence before him: "Throughout history only one power has consistently struck at the roots of criminality—the power of religion, reaching the masses with its great moral principles."

It would not be a popular sermon, he realized. Too abstract. A dangerous adjective in his profession.

His lean, big-boned face grew taut. A certain polite restlessness in his congregation had of late suggested that they were finding these large, remote subjects somewhat tiresome. They had liked him better when he encouraged them to think that God took a friendly interest in their personal problems.

He recalled remarks overhead as people were leaving church the previous Sunday. Not one word had been said about the sermon; they were all talking about a sour note struck by the organist in the closing hymn, and he could have sworn that they were almost grateful for it. Not that he blamed them. He knew, better than they, that the power to fill the church with the flutter of angel's wings had left him. It would be sheer hypocrisy on his part to try to recapture that vein.

Elly was now singing, "I love Little Sambo, his coat is so warm." It had been several days, he remembered guiltily, since he had last joined her in play. But in a few minutes he would let her in, and they would find Little Black Sambo together.

The kitten was the first living thing that was completely Ellys. Her life at home had revolved around it ever since Miss Wylie, her schoolteacher, had telephoned him to say that Elly had earned a prize for the best drawing in the class. "Do you think a kitten would make her happy? My cat

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has just had three, and Elly is the right age to have a pet."

"A good idea," he had said.

But Miss Wylie had evidently sensed a reservation, for her voice grew cool. "Please don't think that I'm foisting unwanted cats on my pupils. There'll be no problem in finding homes for these kittens. They're utterly charming. If it's the slightest bit inconvenient—"

"Not in the least," he had reassured her quickly, "I've been thinking about getting Elly a pet. Thank you very much." And this time his voice had carried conviction.

The kitten had taken over the house, a scurrying little black comet on unsteady legs, romping, mewing, appearing in unexpected places, making small messes when it was too far away from its box, ready to play endlessly with Elly, scratching at Dr. Sloane's shoes, demanding attention, falling downstairs, laboriously clambering up again—evoking laughter one moment and dismay the next.

Elly really ought to look after it more carefully, the minister supposed, but it would do no good to tell her so. Since the death of her mother two years earlier, the child's pixie sense of power had grown to the point where he could no longer depend on obedience from her unless he was seriously angry. When they played together her chief enjoyment seemed to come from asserting her will, and he thought it significant that in *Alice in Wonderland* her favorite character was the Duchess.

Which of them, he wondered, had suffered more from the loss of Frieda's warm white bosom and gift of tenderness—the child who hardly remembered her, or he who remembered her too vividly? If, in his pastoral counseling, he had been called on to advise in a case like his own, he would unhesitatingly have stressed Elly's need, would have pointed out the dangers of prolonged asceticism for a full-blooded widower, not yet forty.

Yet when several eligible women in his congregation made unmistakable their readiness to remedy his single state and Elly's mother-lack, he became filled with alarm. Work had become his refuge from their attentions and from his own thoughts—committee meetings, sick visits, preaching, lecturing, fund raising, corresponding, organizing Scout work, remodeling the church, supervising the social and athletic programs, joining civic groups to combat juvenile delinquency. Where was the time for courtship, even if he had known the right woman?

Dr. Sloane shrugged fretfully and kept his fountain pen spinning out its spidery blue trail on the white paper: "Today, more than ever before, we can see that society is paying a gruesome penalty for its prevailing indifference to religion."

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A strident peal from the telephone in the hall below arrested his hand. This was Saturday; Mrs. Hughes, the elderly woman who came in weekdays to keep house for him, was not there. It was an absurd economy not to have a telephone extension in the study, but the life of a minister—certainly the minister of a small and impecunious church—was made up of absurd economies.

He got up hastily.

He saw it at the last instant—as his right foot was descending. The sight of it paralyzed not his muscles but his will. For that instant his foot hovered helplessly, then the piercing squeal and the soft crushing sensation under his heel came together, and he looked down with horror at the wreck he had made of the little black kitten. Bright blood gushed from its mouth as it lay twitching on the wood floor. Almost simultaneously he heard Elly's voice, now from her playroom: "Daddy! The telephone!"

Instinctively he acted to stop her from running into the study. He opened the door, and in a voice which he managed by prodigious effort to keep casual, he called, "Elly, dear, will you answer it? Talk to whoever it is until I get there."

She loved to answer the telephone, and her footsteps thudded downstairs. He spread out a newspaper and his face twisted as he gently lifted the kitten. Its soft warm body was broken beyond hope, but the agonized eyes looked at him, the irises black and enormous. When he put the kitten down on the newspaper there was blood on his shaking hands. He wiped them with his handkerchief.

"Daddy! Daddy! It's somebody for you."

He needed time. Drawing a deep breath he said, too loudly, "Who is it, Elly?"

"A lady. Mrs. Somebody." She probably knew the name, but pretending not to know was one of her teasing games. The kitten's tiny legs jerked feebly. He could not leave it there for her to discover, and a closed door was only an invitation to Elly. Panicky, he lifted the bed of paper on which the dying kitten lay and put it into a desk drawer.

"Daddy?"

"Coming, dear." There was a small hooked rug in the room; he spread it over the blood on the floor before he hurried downstairs.

"He's coming," he heard Elly say. Conscious of her dark eyes staring at him curiously, he avoided looking at her. A glimpse of his face in the hall mirror showed how pale and distraught he looked.

The call was from Miss Agatha Goss, the church organist. "Oh, Dr. Sloane, I do hope I'm not disturbing you. I'm calling to find out whether the new hymnals have

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arrived—for the choir rehearsal tonight."

He had to clear his throat several times before he could say, "I don't think they've come." As he spoke he looked at his right shoe and saw a smear of blood on the rim of the sole. *If thy right foot offend thee cut it off,* his thoughts paraphrased. He said, "If they arrive I'll let you know," and hung up rudely.

Elly was at the foot of the staircase, waiting for him. Her round little face, under its helmet of dark straight hair, cut in a Dutch bob, wore an expression of intense solemnity. For a heart-stopping instant he thought of telling her the exact truth. *Darling, there has been an accident. Little Black Sambo is badly hurt. Try to understand, Elly dear. To prevent him from suffering he will have to be put away. We will have him put out of his pain, we will get a new kitten, and maybe a new puppy dog, and in time we will love them just as much . . .*

The trouble was that she would insist on seeing the kitten—he saw no way to prevent that, once she knew—and his image of her shock and horror blotted out every other consideration. Later, not now, he would tell her the truth, console her, make up to her for everything—later, when the kitten was disposed of and the blood had been washed away.

"Daddy, have you seen Little Black Sambo?" Elly asked. "He's lost again."

"Not in the last little while," he evaded. "Would you like to do something for me, Elly?"

"What?" she said cautiously.

"I feel like hearing some nice music on the radio." It was a suggestion to which she might assent; she loved to fiddle with the radio, usually a forbidden pastime.

"Oh, yes," she said.

"Some nice music," he repeated. As soon as she went into the living room he sped upstairs. When he opened the bottom desk drawer the little body was still struggling to live. He could not suppress a groan. Hastily he picked up the newspaper, wrapped it loosely all around the kitten, and carried it down the stairs walking as quietly as he could. The radio was beginning to chatter wildly; Elly's idea of great fun was to race through the wave bands touching every station on the way.

If Mrs. Hughes were here to keep an eye on Elly he could steal out to the garage, drive over to the veterinary hospital, and have the poor little thing put to sleep. It was painless and quick. If . . . But Mrs. Hughes was not here, and to leave Elly alone in the house was unthinkable.

The stairs creaked loudly under him—he was a big man—and Elly must have heard him or sensed something peculiar in his absence. She poked her dark head into the

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hall and shouted above the blast of a commercial, "Where you going, daddy?"

"There's something I have to do," said Dr. Sloane. "How about that music?"

"... the tastiest, biggest bottle of thirst-quenching pleasure," the radio gibbered. Elly was staring at the crumpled newspaper in his hands.

"Is that a surprise? For me?"

Surprise presents were a frequent enough occurrence in her life so that she no longer snatched at them. "No," he said. "I spilled something."

"What?"

"Just some gluey stuff. A mess." Firmness now might prevail. "Elly, either you get some music on that radio or shut it off! That's a terrible noise."

She made a face. "You look funny," she said. As she ran back to the radio and began again to course through the wave bands, Dr. Sloane went down into the cellar, knowing the heart of a murderer who has almost been caught red-handed.

The thought of what had to be done appalled him.

Unwrapping the newspaper, he prayed that the kitten was dead. But he saw that blood still trickled from that tiny mouth; there was still life in the glazed eyes. Drowning, poison—they were too slow, too cruel. And he could never bring himself to wring the kitten's neck. Either, chloroform—he had none... A blow on the head? Yes, one quick, merciful blow....

The radio upstairs had been tuned over to a cheerful crooner who was confiding that he loved to get a loving letter, but there was one that he loved better, the one that said enclosed find check. The hammer in the tool kit...

With sick loathing Dr. Sloane put a heavy fold of the newspaper over the head of the dying kitten and brought the blunt weight down. "God forgive me!" he said aloud. He forced himself to look, to make sure the kitten was dead, and he died himself a little at the sight. Breathing with his mouth open, as if he had been running hard, he looked around for a place to hide the body until Elly should be asleep and he could dig a grave in their small garden.

The cellar door opened, and Elly bounced down the steps.

"Elly!" he cried. "Go upstairs!"

She began to say, "Daddy, what are you—?"—and then she saw the dead kitten on the bloody newspaper.

Her scream ran all through his body like a flash of pain. As he took a step forward, she backed away, and he realized that her eyes, big and black like the kitten's, were fixed in terror on the hammer in his hand.

"Oh, no!" he whispered, and flung the hammer away as if it had bitten him. The crash that it

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made on the concrete floor touched off another scream, thin and frightening, like the soughing of a wild wind, such as he had never heard before. "Elly, darling," he said, and tried to take her in his arms. She fought him, kicking, pummeling, scratching, and all the while that thin reedlike scream went on and on, broken only by the sobbing intake of her breath.

"Elly, listen," he begged. "You don't understand!"

She mumbled, "Sambo, you killed Little Black Sambo," and tried to go to the kitten's smashed body. Dr. Sloane caught her by the shoulder and swung her into his arms. Her small fists struck him in the face repeatedly, with all her might, as he carried her upstairs. He did not try to stop her blows. The despairing thought in him was that he had failed her utterly, else how could she think that he would deliberately kill her kitten? His nose began to bleed as they reached the hall, and several drops of blood fell on Elly's yellow dress. The crooner's gay lilt made an eerie accompaniment to her crying.

"Elly," Dr. Sloane begged. "Elly, baby. It was an accident—"

But against the terrible evidence of her eyes his protests were useless.

He set the struggling little figure on a chair. Instantly she broke away and ran shrieking to the front door. She was out of it long before he could stop her.

"Elly!" he called in agonized pursuit.

And when he caught her she screamed, "You killed him! You killed him!" and kicked at her father's legs.

It was a gray misty day, and there was a cold wind. Several passersby stopped. One, a stout fur-coated woman, said, "Why, there's blood on that child's dress."

"Who got killed?" said a man.

"What's happened?" another asked, joining the little group.

"Somebody's been killed!"

"It's her kitten—" Dr. Sloane tried to explain and hold Elly at the same time. Her fierce little shoes kept pounding at his shins. *She hates me,* he thought with dread.

At last he succeeded in pinioning her legs and carrying her toward the house. She shuddered convulsively in his arms.

"What have you been doing to the child?" an indignant male voice asked.

The woman in the fur coat looked at his clerical collar and gasped. "And him a minister!" she said.

"The things that go on," said the man. "It ought to be reported."

Dr. Sloane carried Elly inside and swung the door shut behind him. She stopped struggling, but her sudden limpness was more alarming than her frenzy. Her

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breathing now had a faint rasping note. He put her down on the sofa in the living room, where she lay inertly on the soft green cushions. After a few moments he mastered his trembling body, shut off the blaring radio, moved to the telephone, and dialed the number of Dr. Harris, the physician who had attended Elly since her birth.

The first slow rings were cords of sound tightening round his diaphragm. Presently a detached female voice said, "Dr. Harris' office."

"This is Walter Sloane," he said. "Is Dr. Harris—?"

"Who did you say is calling?"

"Walter Sloane. I must speak to Dr. Harris at once!"

"Sorry, I didn't get the name."

He tried desperately to remain calm. "Sloane—Dr. Sloane of the West Side Community Church."

"Oh, yes. I'm sorry, Dr. Sloane, but Dr. Harris will not be in until late this afternoon. Can I gave him a message?"

"It's my daughter. She is—"

"One moment, please." Dr. Sloane heard a murmur of female voices; it was perhaps half a sick minute before the receptionist brought her attention back to him. "I'm sorry, you were saying?"

"I think it's a state of shock. There was an accident."

"Can you describe her injuries?"

He said, "The accident was to her kitten. The child has had a brutal shock and hysterics."

"I see." The composed voice implied that he was another fussy parent without a sense of proportion. "I will tell the doctor when he comes in."

"You don't understand," Dr. Sloane said with quiet rage. "This is serious. If you can possibly reach him—"

"Dr. Harris is at the hospital. I don't think I can get him now, but I'll leave a message for him to call—"

"Call him now! Without delay! And tell him to call me!" Dr. Sloane hung up.

He returned to the sofa and looked down at the crumpled, bloodstained little figure. How long would she carry with her the nightmare memory of her father standing guiltily over a dead kitten with a hammer in his hand? The question filled his mind as he stood watching her little chest rise and fall with each long breath.

He dared not carry her to her bed for fear she would wake, so he spread his topcoat over her and turned up the thermostat of the oil burner.

When the telephone sounded he sprang to it and spoke in a low voice. "Harris? Thank God." He tried to be direct as he explained.

"The way things happen," Harris said feelingly. "Don't blame yourself. You couldn't help it. How is she now?"

"Sleeping, but it doesn't sound like natural sleep."

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"That's often the way after hysteria. Much better than having to knock her out with drugs. Keep her warm."

"Yes, I've done that."

"Now listen, Dr. Sloane. I'll get there as soon as I can, but there's an emergency here at the hospital and it may take some time. The child will probably sleep for an hour or two anyway, if I know these cases. If she wakes up before I arrive, there ought to be someone else in the house. Someone besides you, I mean. It might be better if she doesn't see you until she has had a chance to—to adjust."

Dr. Sloane said dully, "Yes, I see."

"A woman would be best. Do you know some motherly type whom Elly likes? It ought to be a friendly, familiar face. And she will have to talk to the child."

"I'll think of someone." Dr. Sloane's family were a thousand miles away. And old Mrs. Hughes had never been able to cope with Elly. His mind quested doubtfully among the wives of his friends, seeking one gentle and wise enough to serve the child's need.

"Something else you might think about," said Harris, "is another kitten. Best way to take Elly's mind off the one she has lost. If you can get her to accept another you'll be halfway over the bridge."

Instantly, as Harris disconnected, Dr. Sloane thought of Miss Wylie, Elly's schoolteacher. He fumbled with the telephone book. There were a number of Wylies, but only three women's names among them. The second of these, Miss Carla Wylie, answered the ring, and she had the calm voice that had spoken to him before. When he identified himself she said with the hint of a laugh, "I suppose you're calling about the kitten."

Startled, he said, "Yes. I'm afraid—"

"Oh, don't worry about it. I'll gladly take it back."

"It isn't that. The kitten has had an accident. I'm sorry to have to tell you this. A fatal accident."

Her voice, when it came through, was even and controlled. "Is Ellen all right?"

"I'm not sure. There has been a crisis here, which is my only excuse for telephoning you. Little Black Sambo—that's what Ellen called the kitten—met a tragic death. My fault, and Ellen has had a terrible shock."

"Anything I can do to help?"

"I have no right to ask this—"

"Of course you have. I like Ellen. What is it, Dr. Sloane?"

"Dr. Harris thought another kitten would be a good idea."

"I understand. That's all right. I've got Little Black Sambo's twin brother—or maybe sister, I never can tell with kittens. When do you want him?"

"The trouble is, I'm alone with

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Elly and can't get away. I'd like to have the kitten here, if possible, when she wakes up. It could be very important to her. Is there any way—?"

"Of course. Just let me have your address." He gave it, and she said. "I'm not far. I'll have the kitten there in a few minutes."

She struck him as intelligent and competent; and as he replaced the telephone he wondered if he might persuade her to stay with Elly through the awakening. Tiptoeing back to the living room he saw with relief that Elly was still asleep.

He sank into a chair.

A few seconds later the sharp ring of the doorbell jolted him, and he hurried to the door.

A thickset policeman with a fat friendly face stood on the stoop; there was a squad car at the curb. "Sorry to bother you, Reverend," the officer said, "but some woman's made a complaint at the station. Doesn't seem to make much sense, but she said you were beating up a little girl on the sidewalk."

Dr. Sloane could feel his face flushing. "That's nonsense, of course!"

The policeman grinned. "We get these crank complaints. But she said the child was screaming and bloody all over, so we had to look into it."

"Just a misunderstanding. There was an accident." The expression on the policeman's face changed. "You had better come in."

The officer entered, removed his visored cap, and reached for his notebook. He said slowly, "My name's Kogan. You know how it is, when they file a complaint we got to make a report. Better give me the facts, Reverend."

Dr. Sloane pointed to the sofa. "I don't want to wake her up. Let's go into the kitchen. We can keep an eye on the living room from there."

Hesitating, Kogan said, "Is she okay?" He walked softly to the sofa and gazed at Elly for a moment. Then he followed the minister down the hall.

Dr. Sloane sat down wearily on a kitchen chair, motioned the policeman to another, and explained. Kogan, making notes, interrupted only once. "Let me get this straight. You didn't tell the kid about the accident right away?"

"No. I felt that the shock . . . I didn't want her to see—to see the body."

But the question had startled Dr. Sloane and it gave rise to others. Was it true that he had been thinking only of Elly? Or had he wanted mainly to avoid a scene? If he had been sure of her love and trust, would he not have gently broken the news to her at once? He shook off these confusing thoughts and grimly completed his account.

"That's tough," said Kogan, and went down into the cellar to see

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the kitten's body. On his return his plump face was crinkled into a compassionate squint. "I know how you must feel. I got kids of my own." He scratched his nose. "Excuse me, Reverend, but is there a Mrs. Sloane?"

"No, I'm a widower."

"I see. Got somebody to make sure the kid's all right?"

"Yes, the doctor's coming—Dr. Henry Harris, in the Medical Building."

"Okay." Kogan put his notebook away. "Sorry I had to bother you. Hope the little girl gets over it fast. I know how it is with kids. They got to be loved all the time to make up for the rotten things that happen. It could just as easy have been one of mine. We got dogs and cats both."

At the front door the policeman stopped and said in a low voice, "Listen, I can see where you wouldn't want some reporter to pick this up for a news story. A crank files a complaint, next thing it mushrooms into a rumor. In your business that wouldn't be good—always some people ready to believe the worst. I'll talk to the sergeant. He's a good guy, he'll handle it." He waved away Dr. Sloane's thanks.

As Kogan reached the sidewalk an old but neat convertible drew up behind the police car and a young woman got out quickly. She was carrying a small kitten on one arm, holding it securely with her other hand. The kitten, mostly black, with a white chest, white paws, and a white nose, was miaowing lustily. The policeman watched as Dr. Sloane descended the steps.

Miss Wylie was not much more than thirty, a small slender woman. She smiled briefly. "Here we are, Dr. Sloane."

"Thank you for coming," he said.

Kogan leaned out of the window of his car. "That the new kitten for the kid? Good idea." He drove away, and Miss Wylie looked curiously after him. Dr. Sloane felt constrained to explain the policeman's presence as they entered the house.

"You're having a bad day," Miss Wylie replied. She was a clear-skinned woman with high cheekbones, a wide mouth, and brown hair worn in a casual crop. "How is Elly?"

"Sleeping. In there, on the sofa."

"What do you want me to do? Hush," she whispered to the squalling kitten in her hands.

Elly moaned a little but did not wake. He led Miss Wylie through to the kitchen. "I'd better tell you all about it," he said.

Repetition, he found, made the story no easier to relate. On hearing the way of the black kitten's death Miss Wylie caught her lower lip with her teeth. But her intent brown eyes never ceased to study his face.

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"Of course I'll stand by," she said, when she had heard him out. "I think the best thing would be to have the new kitten right in the room with Elly when she wakes up. I'll judge what to say by how she reacts."

"You feel I'd better stay away?"

"Until she's prepared, yes." As if she felt this to be harsh she added a word of reassurance. "Once she understands, she'll adjust quickly. They do at that age, thank heaven."

Behind his awareness of her there was something gnawing at his mind. It came to him—a phrase the policeman, Kogan, had used: "They got to be loved all the time." Yielding to an impulse he said abruptly, "Miss Wylie, I'd like to ask your opinion of Elly. As a personality, I mean. How does she strike you?"

She thought for an unsmiling second. "Elly seems a pretty stormy little girl inside."

"Stormy? You mean temperamental? Or bad-tempered?"

"I think perhaps unhappy. I've seen it in other children when they feel—rejected. They burst out, the way Elly often does, to get recognition."

He stared at her. "Rejected?"

"I'm sorry," she said. "You asked me."

The words, "Why, I love Elly," were on the tip of Dr. Sloane's tongue. But he suppressed them with the irritable reflection that he did not have to justify himself to this woman, this stranger. At the same time he had the disturbing impression that she was thinking much more than she was saying. He decided to challenge her.

"Miss Wylie," he said, "there's no doubt in your mind, is there, that it *was* an accident?"

With just the slightest hesitation she replied, "I'm sure it was an accident."

They looked at each other, and he forced a smile. "I suppose the Freudians would say that the accident represented a subconscious intention on my part. Thank God, I don't accept that."

She answered him carefully. "Yes, it's a rather terrifying idea."

He felt as if he had been struck. She believed, she actually believed that at some primitive level of his unconscious mind he had wished the kitten dead. But even while resentment worked in him he could not help pursuing the notion with a kind of fascinated horror. Could some inner motive, unknown even to himself, have paralyzed his will while his right foot was in midair? Could he have stopped his foot from coming down on that little body? He shook his head angrily. "I loved that kitten," he said.

Her eyes widened at the intensity of his voice. "I'm sure you did."

With stiffened lips he said, "You can carry psychoanalytic theory too

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far." His voice sounded shrill to his own ears, and he forced it lower. "Why," he said with an unsuccessful attempt at casualness, "if I accepted your view—"

"Please," she objected. "It's not my view."

He felt that he had to make himself understood. "Before the accident I was feeling a little annoyed at Elly— grant that. Would you suggest that there was some psychological connection between that fleeting irritation and Little Black Sambo's death? Why, if I thought that I would have to regard myself as a spiritual criminal instead of a minister of God."

"You're exaggerating, aren't you?"

He leaned against the wall to conceal his tension. "Exaggerating? When you've practically accused me or murdering the kitten? Worse, of symbolically murdering my own daughter?"

"Dr. Sloane! I've accused you of nothing!" She rose, frowning, but her voice was full of concern. "You've been under great strain. Why don't you try to rest while I stay with Elly?"

He looked at her without answering. After a moment she went into the living room, still carrying the black-and-white kitten, which had fallen asleep.

Dr. Sloane resisted an impulse to sit down and bury his face in his hands. In an effort to stop thinking he forced himself into physical action: he went down into the cellar, put the dead kitten's body in a small box, took it out to the garden, dug a tiny grave, interred the cardboard coffin, and scooped back the loose dirt. He wanted to say some words for the vanished little life, but the only thing that came to him was an inward plea, stark and formless: "God, have mercy on all living things. Help us, oh help us, God."

Returning to the house he found a sponge, filled a pail with water and detergent, and went upstairs. As he passed the living room he saw that Elly was still sleeping, while Miss Wylie sat in a deep chair, the new kitten on her lap. Their eyes met, but they did not speak.

The hooked rug in the study showed a dark moist spot at its center, and he worked at it, and at the stain on the wood below, until he was satisfied that Elly would notice nothing.

When the job was finished he felt very tired. He sat down at his desk and began to leaf through the pages of his unfinished sermon.

A sound from below reached him and he froze in his chair. It was Elly's voice, her small waking-up voice. But he could not make out the words. Then he heard Miss Wylie's contralto murmur. There was a silence, and for one bottomless instant he waited for that terrifying scream. It did not come.

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The warm womanly tones resumed. An impulse to go to the landing and listen was checked by an unaccountable feeling that he had no right; yet he was aware of being hopeful, of having shaken off despair.

A quick, strange thought came to him: the kitten had died for Elly and him, its blood had opened the way for his redemption. He wanted to take Elly into his arms, hold her tight, and tell her that she would never again want for love. He wanted to expiate with love his crime of not having loved enough.

With an abrupt movement he flung the sermon into the waste-basket. The thing was a bore. He owed his congregation a message with more God in it than that.

Picking up his pipe he cleaned and filled it carefully, lighted the tobacco with a minimum of flame.

The trouble with the sermon, he recognized, was that he had been thinking of crime in the abstract, as something remote from himself, as something on the outside. Now what he wanted to talk about was the criminal within, the criminal lurking in the soul of every man —the hidden criminal whom only love can hold in check. And his heart would be in every word.

From below he heard a faint miaow, an exclamation from Elly, and Miss Wylie's cheerful laugh. Not since his wife's death, it occurred to him, had he heard a woman's laughter in this house. He stayed quiet, puffing at his pipe with a sense of growing serenity, waiting patiently now for Miss Wylie to call him.

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It has often been said that a writer's most important sale is his or her first—the "breaking into print," the auctorial baptism as a professional. True, the first sale is usually a long-awaited turning point in a writer's career; but a cogent argument could be made to prove that a writer's second sale is equally important—perhaps even more important—than the first.

We described Robert Edward Eckels' first story, "The Man in the Revolving Door" (in the June 1969 issue of EQMM) as "extremely smooth and unusually entertaining." Well, Mr. Eckels' second story can be described in exactly the same words; and this second story, like the first, has "an added quality of appeal": it's a con-man story—and we confess that we have always been suckers for good con-man stories . . .

Keep 'em coming, Mr. Eckels!

THE BLUE LADY

by ROBERT EDWARD ECKELS

LOVELL WAS WAITING FOR ME IN the park across from Carter's mansion. As I walked up the path I could see him fidgeting on the bench. If he'd been a less sedentary man he would have been pacing back and forth. If he'd been less of a health nut he'd have been on his second pack of cigarettes. That's how nervous he was.

"You're late," he said accusingly as I came up to him.

"Only fourteen minutes," I said. "That counts almost as being on time."

"That's easy to say, but now you'll be late seeing Carter."

I sat down on the bench beside him. "How can I be late when he doesn't know I'm coming?" Nodding toward the package he clutched in his lap I said, "Is that the painting? Let me have it and I'll beard Mr. Carter in his lair."

Lovell let go of the painting with one hand and clamped onto my arm. "Maybe we shouldn't go through with this, Harry."

"Don't be silly," I said. I pried his fingers loose and flicked my own across my sleeve to smooth out the creases. "Of course we're going to go through with it. If that painting is half as good as

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you say it is, Carter might as well start counting out the money right now."

I took the painting from him and hefted it in my hands. It was surprisingly light; most of the bulk came from the wrapping. The picture itself was perhaps a foot and a half high by a foot wide. "Van Diemen's *The Blue Woman,*" I said, "and our key to fortune."

"*The Blue LADY,*" Lovell corrected. "And it's good all right." The quality of his work was the one thing you couldn't shake Lovell on. "Van Diemen himself couldn't tell this one from the one he painted two hundred years ago."

"Then there's nothing to worry about," I said and left him still fretting on the bench.

I walked up the curving white-gravel driveway to Carter's front door. Arriving by car would have been classier, but cars have license plates and can be traced. Not particulary wanting to be traced, I walked.

There was a fancy bell-pull arrangement beside the door. I ignored it and rapped with my knuckles. A few minutes and several raps later, the door swung open and a girl in a black and white maid's uniform gazed at me out of dark, liquid eyes.

"Yes?" she said.

"My name is Lang," I said. "I've come to see Mr. Carter."

"I don't know," the girl said doubtfully. "Mr. Carter is very busy—" Her voice trailed off indecisively. She spoke with a heavy accent—German, I supposed. And from the way she acted, she hadn't been in this country very long—at least, not long enough to lose her awe of Americans or to acquire the arrogant attitude that most rich men's servants display to their masters' supposed social inferiors.

Nevertheless, she wasn't going to let me in. But I'd expected that.

"Tell him it's about *The Blue Lady,*" I said. When she still hesitated I made a shooing motion with my fingers. "Go ahead," I said, "tell him. He'll understand what I mean."

"Wait," she said and closed the door gently in my face.

I turned away from the house and rocking back on my heels casually inspected Carter's front lawn. It was a beauty. A lot of time and money had been spent on that landscaping. Carter's money, I surmised, but somebody else's time. Nothing in my research on Carter had led me to believe that he was the type to find the slightest pleasure in puttering with petunias. His sole passion was collecting. He'd started with money. And when, after his 20th or 30th million, that had palled, he had turned to art—particularly Van Diemens. Hence, Lovell's carefully

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recreated masterpiece. Carter had tried to buy the original six months before but had been outbid by a consortium on behalf of the Whitfield Museum.

There was a slight noise behind me and I turned around. The maid was back, holding the door open for me. I smiled at her encouragingly.

"Come with me, please," she said.

She led me to a small office off the entrance hall where a man with a round unlined face and a shock of startling white hair sat behind a desk.

"Mr. Carter?" I said although I knew he wasn't.

"No," he said. The frost in his voice contrasted with his southern accent. "I'm Mr. Ward, Mr. Carter's secretary." A good part of his duties must have been performed around the swimming pool, because his face and hands were deeply tanned. It set off the white hair well and vice versa. And I'm sure Ward was well aware of it. "Now what's all this about?" he asked.

"I have," I said, "a painting here that I'm sure Mr. Carter will be interested in seeing." I started to take off the wrapping. It was an awkward job because I had to hold the package steady with one hand and use the other to rip off the bits of sealing tape that Lovell had stuck on every conceivable crease and opening. Finally I smiled apologetically at Ward, set the package down on his desk, and went to work with both hands. It wasn't class, but it was efficient. I had the picture out in a matter of seconds.

In the meantime Ward had risen and was now staring distastefully at the jumble of brown paper and sealing tape on his desk. His attitude changed quickly enough, though, when he saw the painting. He took it from me and examined it front and back. He pursed his lips and clucked his tongue and went through all the other little mannerisms that people use when they're called on to inspect something they really don't understand.

"Yes," he said finally, "I believe Mr. Carter *would* be interested in seeing this. Wait here." Almost as an afterthought he waved a hand airily in the general direction of some modernistic assemblages of improbable curves and angles. "You may use one of those chairs," he said.

And with that he bustled out of the room. I picked out the chair that looked least uncomfortable, sat down, crossed my legs, and lit a cigarette. And waited.

In exactly 17 minutes the cops were there.

There were three of them, two blue caps and one plainsclothes detective named Ryker, from the Fraud-Bunco squad. Ryker left me in the custody of the two blue caps and went upstairs to confer

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with Ward and presumably with Carter himself. I did my best to look properly ruffled and indignant but gave it up when I saw it wasn't impressing the blue caps.

I was on my fourth cigarette when Ryker and Ward came back. Ryker was holding Lovell's copy of *The Blue Lady* negligently in one hand. He shook his head sadly at me.

"Of all the dumb crooks," he said, "that I've met in my life you sure take the cake. Not only do you pick the one guy in the country sure to spot a phony Van Diemen a mile off to sell your fake to but the picture you copy is one even an idiot would know is now hanging on the East Wall of the Whitfield Museum."

I was tempted to ask Ryker when he'd learned that last interesting bit of information, but I didn't. Instead I merely said, "I'm afraid there's been some mistake."

"Sure has," Ryker said, "and you made it." His free hand made an upward, lifting motion. "On your feet. We're going downtown."

I remained seated. "No," I said. "What I meant is, I never claimed that painting is an original Van Diemen. Nor did I indicate in any way that I intended to try to sell it to Mr. Carter. As I recall, all I said was that I believed Mr. Carter would be interested in *seeing* the painting."

Ryker's eyes narrowed. He swung to face Ward. "Is that right?" he demanded.

Utter dismay swept across the secretary's face. "I—uh—well—" He wet his lips. "Well, I—uh—really don't remember his exact words, but—"

But it was only too clear—to Ryker as well as to me—that Ward was remembering only too well.

Ryker turned back to me. "Smart guy, aren't you?" he said. "Well, we'll keep an eye on you. So you watch your step."

I stood up and smiled at him. "May I have my painting back, please?"

Ryker handed me the picture roughly. "Okay," he said, nodding toward the door, "you can go now."

I kept the smile on my face and shook my head politely. "No," I said. "I still think Mr. Carter would like to see this painting."

Ryker glanced at Ward, got no response, shrugged, and left the room followed by the two blue caps.

"All right," I said to Ward, "the fun and games are over. You can take me to your boss now."

Ward turned his back on me, picked up the phone on his desk, and spoke softly into it. Then he listened for a few moments, put the phone down, and beckoned me to follow him. He didn't look as if he enjoyed it.

Carter was seated at his desk at the far end of his office when

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Ward and I entered. He didn't look up but kept his head bowed so that his face was partially hidden and only the bald top of his head showed clearly. I was willing to bet that what he was scribbling away so furiously at was something like "The quick brown fox" or "Now is the time for all good men."

He let us stand in front of his desk for several minutes before he threw down his pen violently and scowled up at me.

"All right," he said, "how much?"

"How much?" I said. "How much for what?"

"Don't be coy with me," Carter said. "You baited your trap and I let this"—he glared at his secretary and Ward paled beneath his tan— "stampede me into falling for it. I mean, how much to assuage your wounded feelings and maligned reputation." He paused to pick up his pen again. "You might as well settle now," he went on. "Lawyers' fees will eat up anything more you'd get by going to court. I guarantee my lawyers will see to that."

"I think it would be best if you and I spoke in private, Mr. Carter," I said.

"Not a chance," Carter said. "Any time I talk to someone as tricky as you I want a witness."

"As you wish," I said. Without waiting for an invitation I sank down into one of the armchairs facing Carter's desk. His frown deepened and Ward looked as if I'd defiled a cathedral. I ignored them both and went on blandly, "I'm afraid you've misjudged me, Mr. Carter. I'm not a swindler. I'm a thief."

Carter's eyes dropped from my face to the painting lying on my lap, then flicked to his secretary. "You," he said. "Get out!"

As the door closed behind Ward, Carter's gaze swiveled back to me. "You mean to say," he said, "that that—" His voice failed him.

"Really is *The Blue Lady*— the genuine one?" I smiled and shook my head. "No, it's a copy. But a very special copy made by an artist associate of mine using the same techniques used by that Dutchman who passed off so many fake Old Masters on the Germans during the second World War. You may recall that the fraud was discovered only when he confessed to save himself from being charged as a collaborator."

I passed the painting over to Carter. "Frankly, Mr. Carter," I continued, "nothing short of a detailed spectographic analysis will distinguish this painting from Van Diemen's original. No, let me take that back. There is one other way. If you'll look closely on the back you'll notice there is a small x in indelible ink in the lower left corner—put there to preclude any possibility of confusion among those few of us who are—ah—shall

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we say, in the know."

Obediently Carter reversed the canvas, nodded when he found the x, then resumed his study of the painting itself.

Finally he set it down on his desk and sighed somewhat regretfully. "Very interesting," he said. "But I wouldn't be interested in a copy—not even one as good as this."

I nodded. "I didn't expect you would be, Mr. Carter. For a true collector like yourself it's the real thing or nothing. But," I added seriously, "isn't it true that the fact of possession is what's important? That what others think doesn't matter as long as you possess the original and you know it?"

Carter's eyes were now narrow-slitted with interest. "Yes," he said slowly, "I suppose that is true. What's your point?"

"Very simply this, Mr. Carter," I said. "As I told you I'm a thief." I hitched my shoulders, then let them drop. "I propose to steal *The Blue Lady* from the Whitfield and leave this copy in its place, then sell the original painting to an interested collector—yourself for example—for $100,000, payable on delivery in, say, five weeks."

After a long moment he shook his head. "You'd never get away with it. Sombody would be bound to notice."

"Would they?" I said with a hint of amusement in my voice. Then, more seriously: "Tell me truthfully, Mr. Carter, wasn't your initial decision that this painting was a fraud based largely on the assumption that the original was hanging in the Whitfield Museum?"

"That did play some part in my thinking," Carter admitted gruffly.

That was as much of an admission as I'd get from him, but it was enough. "In the same way," I said, "art experts and critics the world over look at paintings in museums and galleries and assume that because the paintings are where they are they must be what they purport to be, the originals." I shook my head slowly. "I'd hate to tell you, Mr. Carter, how many beloved masterpieces are actually fakes. It would be years, if ever, before the Whitfield submitted *The Blue Lady*—this copy—to the kind of testing necessary to expose it. And you could display *The Blue Lady* in your possession confident that everyone who saw it would assume it to be a copy." I permitted myself a small laugh. "You could, in effect, have your cake and eat it too."

I watched cupidity and caution battle to a standoff behind Carter's eyes. Finally he said, "No, it's still impossible. The Whitfield is the most security-minded museum in America."

"More security-minded than the

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Prado or the British National Gallery?"

That was the clincher. Carter's mouth dropped. "You mean," he said, "that you've substituted paintings in the Prado and the British National Gallery?"

I just smiled.

It took Carter a moment to recover his composure. "You understand," he said at last, "that I couldn't afford to be implicated in this in any way."

"You wouldn't be. I have a reputation to maintain, so protecting you is as much to my interest as to your own."

Carter nodded. "All right then," he said. "It's a deal. $100,000 for *The Blue Lady*." He looked up at me from under his eyebrows. "I suppose you'll want the payment to be in cash."

Now it was my turn to nod. "Yes," I said. "Checks have such an embarrassing habit of turning up when you least expect them to."

Carter stood up and I rose to meet him as he came around the desk to hand me back the painting.

"Good luck," he said.

I tucked the picture under my arm. "Luck," I said, "plays no part in my operations."

He started to ring for his secretary, but I told him I could find my own way out.

Lovell caught up with me when I was two blocks away from the house. He was breathing hard, as if he'd been running.

"Man," he said between gasps, "I thought I'd die when the police showed up. I mean, it really got to me."

"It shouldn't have," I said. "We expected him to call the police. It was part of the plan."

"I know, but still—" Lovell shook his head. "I'm not cut out for this sort of thing. And the worst yet to come—robbing the Whitfield Museum!"

"Lovell," I said patiently, "you are an excellent artist. You may even be a genius in your own twisted little way. But you have one very bad fault. You don't listen. How many times do I have to tell you? We're not going to rob the Whitfield Museum. We are going to take this painting back to your studio, remove the supposedly indelible mark from its back, and then in five weeks sell it to Carter for $100,000.

"After all, we're swindlers, not thieves."

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Detective Superintendent Marquis had retired. After thirty years of police service—the terror of evildoers throughout England—Marquis was now enjoying the evening of his life. And then an unfinished case out of the past broke the tranquillity of his retirement. But once a policeman, always a policeman; after thirty years the sense of duty did not even fade away ... The very Gallic story of a very British detective and of a tense cat-and-mouse game ...

ONCE A POLICEMAN

by SIMON TROY

DETECTIVE SUPERINTENDENT JOHN Marquis had retired. Plain John Marquis, well-pensioned, had a quarter of a century of good life before him if he took care. He sat outside the Casino Cafe on the Boulevard Jean Jaures, sipping a near-beer and looking earnestly across the metal-topped table at Max Lawton. Especially at Max Lawton's eyes.

Throughout his professional career of three decades Marquis had always prided himself that he never forgot a face. He had his limitations. He had never read Spinoza or been inside Festival Hall. He had sometimes been accused of lacking imagination. But faces he knew. Beyond reasonable doubt he knew Max Lawton's face, though he had seen it only once before—years ago and then only for a few seconds. But he knew.

Beyond reasonable doubt, too, there was the snag. With Scotland Yard behind him he could have pounced. But the Yard wasn't behind him now. He couldn't afford *any* doubt, reasonable or not.

There were lawyers of an astuteness in Nice who would be delighted to cross swords with Marquis. In the old days he would have walked across the street, down the Place du Palais to the Prefecture, and a casually presented card would have gained instant respect and attention. But he was an outsider now, ill at ease among these gun-toting policemen who directed the streaming traffic as if they were ballet dancers.

Max Lawton was a big square man with red-brown hair and a good-humored, devil-may-care

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look. Like many practical, successful men he cared little for appearances. This morning he wore old slacks and a sweat-stained shirt. Marquis doubted if he shaved more than once a week; he had never seen him in Nice without a growth of stubble. That, of course, could be a matter of policy.

Lawton had parked his Mercedes near the bus station with a fine disregard for regulations. He had put in two hours at the factory, he told Marquis, and that's enough if you've got your staff trained the way they should be. They hadn't arranged to meet here at the corner of the Casino Cafe, but each was getting to know the other's habits by now. They had first met in Nice at Charley's, and since then the love-hate relationship between them had grown. Marquis knew what he knew. Lawton knew that he knew, and they played the cat-and-mouse game with sophisticated skill.

"So this is your last week-end!" Lawton said.

"I'll be back," said Marquis, rubbing his bony nose. He had no family. For a year or two he would continue to live in the Bournemouth hotel where he had made his home since his retirement. He could come and go as he pleased.

"Why not come down to Cap Laurent again?"

That was where the Lawton family had their seaside house. Lucky, Marquis thought; their home was luxurious and restful.

"Felice has taken a great fancy to you," Lawton went on. "Drusille too. They'd be delighted if you spent your last week-end with us."

Marquis caught the waiter's eye. "I'll think about it."

The prospect was inviting. He liked Lawton's attractive wife, and the child too. Lawton's younger daughter had died of polio a year ago. Marquis frowned. He had often said that sentiment should play no part in a policeman's life, but what can one do?

Lawton was observing him through half-closed but remarkably alert eyes. "Any second thoughts on your manhunt?"

"I wouldn't call it that. I shouldn't have mentioned it. You're his double, that's all. A coincidence that reminded me of the old days."

"You drop hints, you make obscure allusions. Why don't you tell me the whole story? I might be able to help—who knows?"

Marquis pushed one of the frosted bottles toward Lawton. He was beginning to realize the potency of *laissez faire*. Water gushed out of opened curbside faucets; the fruit stalls bordering the little square smelled like the harvest festivals he remembered from his youth; buses with chrome trim and green-tinted glass slid away toward Cagnes and Menton. It was too good a morning to spoil,

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but Lawton had asked for it. So he would have it.

"He was clever," Marquis began. "Mixed up in the Gantry Street affair. In fact, I'm pretty sure he planned it. Twenty thousand pounds in five minutes flat. Broad daylight. And never a cosh or a scratch."

"Sounds like a civilized man," Lawton said. "You have to give him that. But surely they didn't try moving that amount of loot in a plain truck?"

"Armored. Nobody before then had thought about a high-speed drill and a nozzle pumping gas inside."

"That rings a bell! I remember something about it. But they got the gang, didn't they?"

"Most of 'em, but not the one who mattered. I don't think anyone even saw him. That is, anyone but me."

"At close quarters?" Lawton asked politely.

"As close as I am to you at this moment."

"Still, it's a long time ago."

"Oh, yes. The others have done their stretch. We never located the stuff. They'll be living off the fat of the land now. You could say they've paid for it, but he hasn't—yet."

"And you'd like him to pay?"

"Fair's fair," Marquis said.

"Ah, well, I wish you luck. How did you come to—to encounter him personally?"

Marquis sighed heavily. "It all happened," he said, "within a stone's throw of Grape Street police station."

"L'effronterie!" remarked Lawton.

"La simplicite!" said Marquis, not to be outdone. "A stolen furniture van broadside across the street, a faked collison lower down between two cars, thus causing a diversion."

"And your man? Where was he, and how did you realize he was the leader of this nefarious gang? I have it—he was driving one of the cars!"

"No, he was watching from a doorway. I was on the spot within a minute. I saw him before I saw the crashed cars. I didn't see his face—it was half-turned away from me. But he raised a whistle to his lips as we came on the scene."

"A signal?"

"No doubt. Then he saw that he had been observed and took to his heels."

"With you in hot pursuit."

"I chased him towards a narrow street and thought I had him, but when I turned the corner he had vanished. The street was deserted. There was a little shop, a general dealer's such as one finds in poor streets. The door was open. A man wearing an apron and a bowler hat was behind the counter. I shouted from the door—had he seen a man running past? He

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said yes indeed, toward the foot of the street, where there was a narrow passage. I ran—"

"But the passage was no doubt a cul-de-sac," Lawton said with sympathy. "So you returned—"

"I returned"—bitterly. "The proprietor of the shop was at the door, dancing with rage. The scoundrel I was after had dashed into the shop, snatched his apron and hat, and forced him at gunpoint to lie behind the counter while he gave me those false directions."

"The fellow had a sense of humor."

"More than possible. He even left his gun behind. It was a toy with a solid barrel."

"I can imagine your rage, my dear Marquis. Another *demi?*"

"One more, yes. But I remembered his face. The shape, the set of his ears, the red-brown hair."

"So much like mine! Ah, well. One of these days, Marquis—"

"Yes, if it takes me ten years."

When Lawton had gone, Marquis strolled back toward his hotel, deep in thought. Much would have happened by Saturday. It might be that neither he nor the Lawton family would be spending the week-end at Cap Laurent. Marquis had hopes.

But the hopes were tinged by something he would have recognized as regret if he had ever experienced it before.

The three days he had already spent at Lawton's home had not been a success. He had thought out a foolproof way of settling Lawton's identity once and for all, but it hadn't worked. And even before that there had been embarrassing moments.

Lawton's wife and child, of course, were pawns in the game. He doubted if Felice knew her husband's secret. Certainly Drusille had no suspicions. She followed Marquis around like a small shadow, embarrassingly close. On Sunday it was her eleventh birthday, and he found himself in the place of honor at her party, with nothing to give her.

"But you shall have something," he promised. "Only yesterday, on the Rue de France, I saw a diary bound in leather that will last five years. Also, it plays a little tune when you open it."

"That will be enchanting!" Felice said. "You will be able to write in it till you are sixteen, Drusille. But you spoil her too much, John."

"So do you."

He remembered the younger Lawton child who had died. Perhaps Felice was thinking of her too; a long silence came between them.

It was later that evening when he carried out his plans. If he got into difficulties while swimming among the rocks, what would Lawton do? It was worth trying.

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But fate played against him. He had scarcely cried out for help when the grip of a genuine cramp tightened his calves and thighs. For an agonized minute he waited, eyeing Lawton with desperate anxiety instead of the cynical curiosity he had looked forward to. It seemed an eternity before Lawton plunged in and swam toward him.

"Cramp?" he inquired, turning Marquis on his back and pulling steadily for the strip of yellow sand.

Marquis lay in the sun, unlocking his limbs. "I would have been after you before," Lawton said, "but I thought it was a joke. The sort of joke only you would play. You know, Marquis, the trouble with both of us is that we have too great a knowledge of the human mind."

He turned his head. "Here comes the family. Felice will sympathize and Drusille will probably kiss you. You must bear it all bravely as one of the hazards of your ex-profession."

It had been a humiliating experience. Whatever else, Marquis thought grimly, he would not go swimming at Cap Laurent again.

Time was running short. Marquis lived frugally, but even so, his travel allowance would not last much longer. He considered his next move. He had seen Lawton in the cafes and in the casino; but he had learned precious little. He badly wanted to find out the source of Lawton's wealth.

On his way to the *gare des autocars* the next morning he called at the shop in the Rue de France and bought the diary for Drusille. Which was absurd . . . But he had no quarrel with Drusille, he told himself. Not even with her father. Only with the man who had fooled him in that London back street. One needs to have been a policeman for a long time to think like that.

He made a circuitous journey to Vence and waited there in the sunny *place* for a second bus that took him to the St. Jeannet crossroads. From there he could see the Lawton factory, a group of low modern buildings against the gray hillside. He walked slowly toward it, careful not to approach too closely. When he came to a rock outcrop beside the road, he leaned his back against it and waited.

At four thirty the workmen began to leave. A few cars made off toward Vence and Nice, and groups of men trudged along the lanes, homeward bound. Several came in his direction. No one seemed to notice him. One of them, a sturdy fellow in his thirties, walked alone toward the crossroads, and Marquis followed at a safe distance.

The workman turned into the *auberge* with Marquis close be-

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hind. Both asked for beer, both stood near the door, cooling off. The fellow might only be waiting for a bus, in which case there was no time to lose.

"One doesn't expect to see a factory up here in the hills," Marquis said conversationally.

"The Henri Lawton factory is well-known, M'sieur."

"Lawton, Yes, that's a name I seem to have heard. What kind of work do you do there?"

He asked in just the right tone on disinterested politeness; the man seemed to have no suspicions.

"We are concerned with miniaturization techniques, M'sieur. Transistor devlopments, semiconductor devices."

"And you have an Englishman at the helm! Very gratifying to know that."

"An Englishman who has been here so long and is so much one of us that he is now accepted."

"Interesting." Marquis anticipated the man's second bottle. "Wonder how he came to settle down here."

"Many stories are told. It is said that he escaped from the Italians—from here it is no great distance to the frontier—and was wounded while fighting with the Resistance at Moulinet. He married a local girl, you understand—very beautiful, very charming. And when the abandoned factory was to be sold at public auction he made a bid for it."

Marquis nodded affably. "M'sieur Lawton must have been able to command a good sum of money to do that," he remarked.

"Again, one hears many stories. It is said that he won a large sum in the State Lottery."

"Ah, well, fortune favors the bold. When would that have been?"

"In 1955 or '56, M'sieur—yes, as long ago as that. I have worked there for twelve years."

"And you have no objection to working for an Englishmen?" Marquis asked.

The man lifted his shoulders. "The wages are good, the conditions are good—English or French, what is it to me?"

A bus toiled up the slope. The workman excused himself and crossed the road. Marquis inquired how he could return to Nice. A bus would shortly leave by way of the Var valley, the *patron* told him, and to while away the time he drank a third bottle. One could imbibe the stuff like lemonade; all it did was make one sweat. Later that evening he would have a drink of real English beer at Charley's.

He walked straight from the bus station to the Prefecture. No one seemed in any great hurry to attend to him. Even when he mentioned his former rank and stated that his business was urgent, there was no immediate reaction.

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Then a bored man behind a desk asked what kind on business.

"The apprehension of a suspected criminal," Marquis said testily.

The bored man shuffled papers. If M'sieur would be so kind as to wait—

He waited half an hour with no word spoken on either side. At last he was conducted to a second and then to a third official. Finally he found himself in a boxlike office overlooking the Flower Market, seated at a table opposite a pale, youngish man with mild brown eyes and a small mustache, who shook hands and said that he was Inspector Diderot.

"If I can be of any help, M'sieur . . ."

Marquis drew a long breath, and began at the beginning. At least he could make a concise statement. Diderot seemed to think so too; he made an occasional note but did not once interrupt. When Marquis had finished, Diderot lit a cigarette and blew a ring of smoke toward the ceiling.

"So what would you like me to do, M'sieur?"

"What I would have done if you'd brought the same story to me when I was at Scotland Yard."

"There are difficulties . . . Not least, the time that has elapsed. I know of this man Lawton, yes. But I shall need to investigate. I suggest that you come to see me again tomorrow. Will three o'clock be convenient?"

Marquis kept the friendly smile on his face. There was no point in removing it. He shook hands, and took his leave, inwardly cursing.

Strolling back to the Boulevard Jean Jaures he found himself looking toward the Casino Cafe. No sign of Lawton—there wouldn't be at this hour. Why was he irked by this odd feeling of guilt? Damn it, *he* wasn't the criminal. No need for him to walk on the shady side of the street. All the same—

Putting his hand into his pocket he felt the diary he had bought for Drusille. When all this was over, he could perhaps send it to her anonymously. Why should *that* worry him?

He went to Charley's for the drink, then to the Cyrano for dinner. Nice lay breathless under a purple sky. He stalked through the gardens to the casino and lost more francs than he could afford. In spite of the voluble workman at St. Jeannet it had not been a good day.

After a sleepless night and an interminable morning he went again to the Prefecture, and this time was conducted more speedily to Inspector Diderot's office. The Inspector fondled his small mustache and greeted him with a lugubrious shrug.

"You heve made your inquiries?" Marquis asked.

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"I have, M'sieur." He shuffled a number of typewritten sheets. "As I indicated yesterday, the position is difficult. There is evidence to show that Lawton *did* escape from Italy and was wounded while fighting with the Resistance. Certainly he made his home here, though he had relatives in England whom he frequently visited."

Marquis nodded. "I expected as much. That, no doubt, was to keep in touch with his criminal associates."

"It may be so—though I can find no trace of his life in England before the war, or any evidence that he had associates, criminal or otherwise."

"But where did the money come from? How was he able to buy the factory and to marry and live as he does?"

"It would be difficult, M'sieur, to find his source of income after so long."

"It shouldn't be difficult to check whether he won a big prize in the State Lottery shortly before buying the factory. Records must surely be kept."

"Naturally. But has he ever claimed that his money came from that source, or is it mere hearsay? If pressed, he could say that he won the money in the casinos of Cannes or Monte Carlo, and you would find it difficult to prove otherwise."

Marquis pushed his feet under Diderot's table. The Inspector's manner almost suggested that Diderot had no great wish to see Lawton apprehended. His next words confirmed that suspicion.

"On the other hand, M'sieur, he has the reputation of being a man of honor, happily married with a charming family, a shrewd businessman with his employers' interests always in mind. A man who has carried out extensive research and won many government contracts which have brought prosperity to the entire district. A most respectable man."

"The respectability being founded on the proceeds of a cunning and unscrupulous robbery," said Marquis tartly.

"The war had an effect upon people, M'sieur. There were those who found it difficult to observe conventions."

"Are you trying to tell me there's no case?"

"On the contrary. I am disturbed by what you have told me. But I have fears. The legal difficulties will be considerable—Lawton is now a citizen of France. Even if those difficulties could be overcome it desolates me to think of a happy family destroyed and a thriving factory becoming derelict, as it may very well do without Monsieur Lawton's personal control."

Marquis stirred uncomfortably. "Such questions often arise in criminal matters. Because one sympathizes with a family or deplores

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a financial loss to a community, one cannot allow crime to go unpunished."

"I agree with you, M'sieur."

"But you are unwilling to take any action?"

"I am willing to go with you and question this man."

Marquis returned his gaze for a moment, then pushed back his chair and went to the window.

"Surely it would be better to bring him here and question him yourself? My part, surely, was to bring these matters to your notice, not to act as unofficial prosecutor."

"In the circumstances," Diderot said, "I would rather arrange for accuser and accused to be brought face to face."

Marquis pressed his stubby fingers against his eyes. He imagined himself listening while Diderot recited the substance of the accusation. He imagined Lawton's face, the dry amusement, the devil-may-care glint in his eyes. Unpleasant to anticipate . . . And yet it was a situation that had to be met.

"Very well," he said, turning from the window. "If that's the way you want to play it."

"I will arrange for a car to be placed at our disposal. If we go immediately, we may be fortunate enough to intercept Lawton as he leaves the factory."

Diderot drove like a demented Jehu as far as the airport, plunged into the underpass, and followed the Var to the first bridge.

"How long since you retired, M'sieur?" he asked politely.

"Six months."

"But once a policeman, always a policeman, no? It is a good thing to have a sense of duty."

Marquis grunted under his breath.

"Embarrassing perhaps, painful no doubt at times, but a good thing," Diderot went on. "With the apprehension of this criminal you will receive a reward?"

"I can't think where from. As you said, I see my duty clearly. No more than that."

They hurtled up the perilously winding road, and there, suddenly, was the factory on the slopes below St. Jeannet. They passed the rock outcrop where Marquis had waited. Today it was a little later; the workmen had already left, and the dusty space in front of the administration building was deserted except for two cars, the roomy old Citroen that Felice used, and Lawton's Mercedes. Diderot drew into line beside them and glanced at his watch.

Marquis realized that he was damp with sweat. Felice was coming toward them, carrying several parcels. Next, Drusille came out of the building and flew to the police car. She leaned over the door and grabbed Marquis' arm.

"Where have you been?" she demanded. "We've been expecting you." Then in a lower voice, "Did

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you bring my diary, Uncle John?"

"I left it at my hotel," he said. "But I will send it to you. I promise you that, Drusille."

Felice had put her parcels in the Citroen and came over to join them. " A police escort!" she said.

"We are birds of the same feathers," said Diderot gravely. "We talk of our profession, we share experiences. Is not that so, M'sieur? We are friends, you understand."

"Then come down to the beach and share your experiences with us. We're expecting you for the week-end, John. I've been shopping in Vence—we're taking both cars."

"But he won't be coming!" Drusille said. "He just promised to *send* my present. Didn't you say that, Uncle John?"

He made no reply. He was looking past her at Lawton who was coming slowly toward them, jacket thrown over his shoulder. A Lawton shaved and spruce, a typical hard-working man with a pleasant week-end before him. Felice and Drusille had gone back to the Citroen. Lawton did not even glance at them. His eyes were on Marquis. Even at this distance Marquis could see their mocking glint.

"Shall I begin the questions?" murmured Diderot.

Marquis might not have heard him. This would be a great victory, the crown jewel of his career. His name would be in all the papers. Detective Superintendent Marquis, terror of evildoers throughout England for three decades, and still formidable even in his retirement. How pleasant to sit in his Bournemouth hotel and enjoy the evening of life, secure in the knowledge that his most astute enemy was safe behind bars. How pleasant to—

A spasm shook him. Diderot, who had been watching closely, put his hand on Marquis' knee. "I asked you M'sieur—are you ill? Is something wrong?"

Marquis spoke with difficulty, as if his tongue were down in his throat. "N—no! I owe you a thousand pardons, Inspector. It is not the man. There was a scar on his jaw. His left jaw. I was confident that under Lawton's stubble—you understand?"

"You mentioned no scar to me," Diderot said.

"It would seem my memory is not so good as it used to be."

"I understand, M'sieur."

Lawton was within earshot. "So you've had to get police protection!" he said jovially.

"It is an old friendship," Diderot murmured.

Lawton stared blankly. "I see. I thought perhaps—But never mind. Do we expect you at Cap Laurent, Marquis?" The vein in his neck was thick and red. "Why not come down with us now?"

"Later," Marquis said. "I have—a parcel to pick up at my hotel."

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"As you wish."

"About seven, I should think."

Lawton nodded. He got into his car and swung it round behind Felice and Drusille. They all waved as they pulled out of the dusty yard, and Marquis waved back.

They reached the Promenade des Anglais before Diderot spoke. Then he looked at Marquis' bleak face and said, "These problems no doubt present themselves in retirement, M'sieur. I may one day experience them myself. There are two observations I would make. Both, perhaps, are trite, but they may assist you. There are some defeats which later arrange themselves as notable victories. You would agree?"

Marquis nodded. "I agree. Drop me at the Boulevard Gambetta. I can walk to my hotel from there."

"A pleasure, M'sieur."

He pulled toward the curb. They shook hands, and Diderot drove off toward the Old Town and the Prefecture.

Marquis crossed the promenade and made for his hotel. He took Drusille's parcel from a drawer and put it in his pocket. Then he packed a few necessities into a small bag and walked toward the *gare des autocars,* where he would catch the next bus to Cap Laurent.

Crossing the Place Massena he bought an evening paper. With ten minutes to spare he dropped in at the Casino Cafe. He unfolded the paper, and there it was on the front page, almost the first thing he saw. **Wealthy Industrialist's Munificent Gift.**

"M. Henri Lawton, well-known industrialist, has given 250,000 francs toward the establishment in Nice of the proposed Polio Research Institute . . ."

He crumpled the paper. *Twenty thousand pounds!*

Then, glancing up, he saw Diderot. He had forgotten that he was no more than a few yards from the Prefecture.

"I knew of it this morning, M'sieur."

"You did?"

"I said I had two observations to make, but we parted before you heard the second. A debt to society must be paid—I agree with you there. But there are many ways of making payment. We deal with only one, you and I."

He saluted smartly. "Do not miss your bus to Cap Laurent, M'sieur."

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Do you believe in voodoo? No, we suppose you don't. But "there are more things in heaven and earth," dear reader, "than are dreamt of in your philosophy" . . .

NEEDLE IN THE HEART

by RICHARD MATHESON

APRIL 23: AT LAST I HAVE FOUND A way to kill Therese. I am so happy I could cry. To end that vile dominion after all these years! What is the phrase?—" 'tis a consummation devoutly to be wish'd." Well, I have wished it long enough. Now it is time to act. I will destroy Therese and regain my peace of mind. I will!

What distresses me is that the book has been here in our library all these years. Why, I could have done it ages ago!—avoiding all the agonies and cruel humiliations I have borne. Still, I must not think like that. I must be grateful I found it at all. *And* amused—how droll it really is!—that Therese was actually in the library with me when I came across the book.

She, of course, was poring avidly over one of the many volumes of pornography left by Father. I shall burn them all after I have killed Therese. Thank God our mother died before he started to collect them. Vile man that he was. Therese loved him to the end, of course. She is just like him really—brutish, carnal, and disgusting. Oh, I will sing for joy the day she dies.

Yes, there she was, below, darkly flushed with sensuality while I, attempting to avoid the sight of her, moved about on the balcony where the older volumes were kept. And there I found it on an upper shelf, a film of gray dust on its pages. *Voodoo: An Authentic Study* by Dr. William Moriarity. It had been printed privately. The Lord only knows where or when Father acquired it.

The astounding thing: I perused it, bored, then actually put it back in place! It was not until I had walked away from it and glanced through many other books that, suddenly, it came to me.

I could kill Therese by use of voodoo!

April 25: My hand is trembling as I write this. I have almost completed the doll which represents Therese—yes, almost completed it. I have made it from the cloth of one of her old dresses which I found in the attic. I have used two tiny jeweled buttons for its eyes. There is more to do, of course, but the project is at last under way.

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I am amused to consider what Dr. Ramsay would say if he discovered my plans. What would his initial reaction be? That I am foolish to believe in voodoo? Or that I must learn to live with Therese if not to love her. Love that *pig?* Never! How I despise her! If I could—believe me—I would happily surrender my half of Father's estate if it would mean that I would never have to see her dissipated face again, never have to listen to her drunken swearing, to her tales of lewd adventuring.

But that is quite impossible. She will not leave me be. I have but one course left to me—to destroy her. And I shall. I *shall.*

Therese has only one more day to live.

April 26: I have it all now—all! Therese took a bath before she left tonight—to Lord knows what debaucheries. After the bath she cut her nails. And now I have them fastened to the doll with thread. And I have made the doll a head of hair from the strands I laboriously combed from Therese's brush. Now the doll truly *is* Therese. That is the beauty of voodoo. I hold Therese's life in my hands, free to choose, for myself, the moment of her destruction. I will wait and savor that delicious freedom.

What will Dr. Ramsay say when Therese is dead? What *can* he say? That I am mad to think voodoo had killed her? (Not that I will ever tell him.) But it will! I will not lay a hand on her—as much as I would like to do it personally, crushing the breath from her throat. But no. I will survive. That is the joy of it—to kill Therese willfully and yet to live! That is the utter ecstasy of it!

Tomorrow night. Let her enjoy her last adventure. No more will she stagger in, her breath a reeking fume of whiskey, to regale me in lurid detail with the foul obscenities she had committed and enjoyed. No more will she—oh, I cannot wait! I shall thrust a needle deep into the doll's heart, rid myself of her forever. Damn Therese, *damn* her! I shall kill her now!

From the notebook of John H. Ramsay, M.D.

April 27: Poor Millicent is dead. Her housekeeper found her crumpled on the floor of her bedroom this morning, clutching at her heart, a look of shock and agony frozen on her face. A heart attack, no doubt. No marks on her. Beside her, on the floor, was a tiny cloth doll with a needle piercing it. Poor Millicent. Had she some brain-sick notion of destroying me with voodoo? I had hoped she trusted me. Still, why should she have? I could never have helped her really. Hers was a hopeless situation. Millicent Therese Marlow suffered from the most advanced case of multiple personality it has ever been my misfortune to observe . . .

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a NEW detective story by

JAMES POWELL

It is just impossible to anticipate the kind of story that James Powell will write next. No two stories by Mr. Powell have been alike, not even remotely similar. And here he does it again—that is, he repeats himself in his own individualistic way—by once more doing the unexpected and the unorthodox.

"Kleber on Murder in 30 Volumes" is an odd title for an odd story. Or perhaps we should ask: can a series of reminiscences and anecdotes about an Inspector of police be called a unified story? Whether your answer is yes or no, you will find this a fascinating and charming off-trailer—and not to be missed ...

KLEBER ON MURDER IN 30 VOLUMES

by JAMES POWELL

FRANCE, ITALY, AND SPAIN ARE mine. Germany, Austria, and Switzerland belong to a little man in Zurich whose name I can never remember.

I make weekly sorties into my territory and report back to my superiors that the good fight is still being fought, that the conservative cut continues to hold its own in a world of styles gone mad. In fact, as both the venerable English textile house which employs me and the Continental tailors I deal with know, nothing makes a middle-aged European feel as well turned out as the thought that he resembles an English "milord" in a good worsted or tweed.

In my bachelor days I worked out of Paris. But I spend so much time on the road that when I married, my wife Jeanine and I decided to settle in Colmar, near the German border where she had grown up. Almost overnight I found myself a member in good

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standing of a close-knit Alsatian family of uncles, aunts, and cousins in a quiet provincial town.

Take a map of the regions of France and you have something like a phrenological chart. A man from here is frugal, from there hot-tempered or dense or a braggart. And, of course, each region has subdivisions of its own. Perhaps this explains the strong attraction that local history has for a certain type of Frenchman. If being from Colmar marks your character, then to know Colmar means to know yourself.

Jeanine's favorite uncle, Uncle Lucien, was the local historian in the family. His store of anecdotes turned the old streets and buildings into the motion-picture lot where Roman legionaires and medieval knights rubbed shoulders with mitred bishops and philosophers of the Enlightenment. I could forgive him if, now and then, he affectionately exaggerated Colmar's historical importance.

I remember one afternoon as we stood in the Unterlinden Museum admiring the gray-green flesh tones of the dead Christ in Grunewald's celebrated Isenheim Altarpiece, Uncle Lucien said quietly, "Did you know, my boy, that this is the only work of art mentioned by name in the Treaty of Versailles? Yes, when France regained Alsace which she had lost in 1870, the politicians wanted a written guarantee that the departing Germans wouldn't carry off this priceless treasure."

Then he pulled out a box of Turkish ovals and proceeded to eat one of the cigarettes in little bites. A strange habit of his, cigarette eating, but one that Jeanine's family seemed to accept as a matter of course. When he had finished the cigarette he shook his head gravely and repeated, "The only work of art mentioned by name in the Treaty of Versailles." He seemed to imply that the First World War had been fought over the possession of that very painting in the Colmar Museum.

Ironically enough, Uncle Lucien didn't live in Colmar. Fortunately, his work, which had taken him to Strasbourg several years before, brought him back four or five times a year to the city he loved so much. I always looked forward to his visits. But there were others who probably did not. If Colmar had an underworld, his arrival must have sent a shudder through it. You see, Uncle Lucien was an Inspector of police.

Uncle Lucien's arrival was always unannounced, but not necessarily without warning. There was, for example, the case of the murder of a wealthy woman named Homard in nearby Mulhouse. I had followed the police investigation in the newspaper. Madame Homard, the owner of a shoe factory, had apparently

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been killed by a burglar. In the ten days preceding the murder five houses in that particular suburb had been broken into, all the work of the same burglar. Nevertheless, since little love had been lost between Madame and Monsieur Homard, the police showed great interest in the husband's movements on the night of the murder. But Homard could account for his time down to the minute. At the actual time of the robbery he and the company's head bookkeeper had been at the plant going over the accounts. The bookkeeper swore to that.

Just when it looked as though the police were going to be forced to return to the burglar hypothesis I read that Inspector Lucien Kleber—Uncle Lucien—had arrived from Strasbourg to take over the case. The very next afternoon, only minutes after newspapers headlining the confession of Homard appeared on the streets of Colmar, Uncle Lucien himself, all charming smiles and elegant manner, arrived at our door.

It was another of Uncle Lucien's peculiarities—along with his habit of eating cigarettes—that he never discussed murder, either in general or in particular, during his visits with us. However, his handling of the Homard case so impressed me that I felt obliged to interrupt one of his pleasant dinner-table monologues on the poetry of La Fontaine to compliment him. "A stroke worthy of the celebrated Inspector Laplume of the Paris Surete," I said.

Uncle Lucien smiled politely but waved my praise aside. "Not at all. A most commonplace investigation. We reserve our big guns like Laplume for cases that are without precedent," he said. "Only when we come up against the one murderer in a thousand who has genuine imagination do we call in Laplume. He arrives. He stalks around like a bear, puffing on his pipe. He asks seemingly meaningless questions. He makes faces. He pulls at his nose. And then by some masterstroke he confounds the murderer and makes us of the local police look like imbeciles. You see, Laplume is also blessed with genuine imagination. But Laplume is one policeman in a thousand. The rest are like your obedient servant. They have no imagination at all."

"Then what do you use?" I asked, for I was still impressed by Uncle Lucien's handling of the Homard case.

"I use history," said Uncle Lucien. "Or to put it another way, I use precedent. As a matter of fact, I've made the study of criminal precedents my life's work."

Jeanine looked up from her plate. The family had known for years that Uncle Lucien was secretly working on a manuscript.

"I'm afraid I don't understand," I said.

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"Look at it like this," said Uncle Lucien as he demonstrated his skill in peeling an orange with a knife. "From the beginning of recorded history men have been trying to dispose of unpleasant wives, troublesome mistresses, and rich uncles. Now all in all there are only a dozen or so basic ways of committing murder: by firearms, by strangulation, by poison, et cetera, et cetera. Each method has perhaps a hundred basic variations: slow poison, instantaneous poison, poisoned darts, et cetera, et cetera. We even have the extraordinary example of a poisoned Bible which the victim kissed in taking an oath. Now, it would be logical to assume that each variation has been tried thousands of times. And history will repeat itself. Each variation will be tried thousands of times more."

Uncle Lucien raised a finger in the air to emphasize his words. "Thus the detective who is ignorant of old murders will be condemned to solve them anew. That is one of my dicta."

"Ah, ha," said Jeanine. "Then you are writing a book of dicta."

"It's a bit more ambitious than that," said Uncle Lucien, dividing his orange into segments.

"Wait," I said, "you're getting a bit ahead of me. Are you saying that there are no new ways of committing murder?"

"Yes," said Uncle Lucien, "if you will keep in mind that I am talking here about the nine hundred and ninety-nine unimaginative murderers. Not the one with imagination. Consider the would-be premeditated murderer. What can we say about him? Obviously he is an amateur with two things in mind: to murder the victim and to do so without being caught. He knows from the newspapers that most murderers are caught. But he is smarter than most, or so he believes. He is sure that all he has to do is put his mind to it and he will come up with the perfect murder. He may even rub his hands together in anticipation and chuckle at the very, very clever murder he will devise. But after weeks of racking his brain and months of stretching his imagination, the very best he can come up with is some pedestrian idea which in his ignorance he thinks is original. Or, more likely than not, he will content himself with tinkering around with the plan used by some convicted murderer that he has read about in the newspaper.

"Since I have mentioned my manuscript," said Uncle Lucien, "let me give you a brief description of it." He wiped his hands on his napkin and pushed his chair back from the table. "When you go into a lawyer's office what do you see? On one wall, bound sets of legal statutes. On the other wall, legal commentaries. *De la Roche on the Civil Code* in

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ten volumes. *Pleuvieux on Marital Law* in fifteen volumes. *Gaston-Lambert on Property* in twenty volumes. These commentaries discuss particular points of law and set down related legal precedents—that is to say, court decisions which have shaped present-day interpretation of the law. In this way, confronted with a case, the lawyer has everything at his fingertips.

"Now why not the same kind of thing for the homicide Inspector? Why not a series of volumes that would be a systematic consideration of all the basic methods of murder, each with its many variations? And following each variation a detailed synopsis of twenty or thirty classic cases—precedents drawn from the last two hundred years—setting forth the murderer's methods and the investigative procedures that resulted in his conviction. Personally, I believe it is an excellent idea. Some day, when a police Inspector is faced with a homicide, his first act will be to turn to his set of *Lucien Kleber on Murder* in thirty volumes and there, in ninety-nine percent of the cases, he will find the description of an identical case along with the correct investigative procedure and perhaps even the identity of the murderer, be it butler, maiden aunt, or spendthrift son."

"And was this how you solved the Homard business?" I asked.

Uncle Lucien shook his head. "My manuscript is not quite that far along," he said. "But my solution was based on the theory of what I have been saying—namely, that in the realm of murder there is nothing new under the sun. Ergo, the detective who knows the past knows the present. Now let us take a look at some recent history. A year and a half ago in Lyons a baker named Jerome murdered his wife and attempted to disguise the crime as the act of a burglar. He emptied out the drawers, stole some money and silverware, et cetera, et cetera. Apparently this Jerome considered his plan so original that he did not think it necessary to provide himself with an unimpeachable alibi. I believe he said he was at the movies. But murders disguised as burglaries aren't that uncommon. Jerome was tried and convicted.

"Now remembering what I've said about lack of imagination, you will understand how Jerome's feeble murder attempt could start an epidemic of similar crimes. Consider the case of a certain Monsieur Tardieu, postman in a small town in the Ardeche. Imagine Tardieu seated at the breakfast table opposite a wife he has wanted to murder for years if only he could think of a safe way. Suddenly he comes upon the Jerome case in the newspaper. Like the simple baker, he thinks

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the idea has some novelty to it. After all it must be admitted that people sometimes *are* killed by burglars. But how stupid this Jerome person was! He didn't even have an acceptable alibi for the night of the murder. Now if *he* were to commit a similar crime, Tardieu tells himself, he would have a foolproof alibi.

"So one Sunday he goes to visit a friend some forty kilometers away. Halfway back—it was a lonely road in the Massif Central—he parks his car among the trees, rides a hidden bicycle into town the back way, murders his wife, fakes a burglary, and cycles back to his car. He then drives the car into a deep ditch by the roadside and stands there until a passing truck picks him up an hour or so later. He arrives home, finds his wife dead, and calls the police. When they arrive he is inconsolable. But two things make the police suspicious: one, the weeping, wailing man telling them about his automobile accident had a bicycle clip on one trouser leg; two, there hadn't been a burglary in that village in living memory. The bicycle was found and Tardieu was tried and convicted.

"Was it surprising then that three or four months later a cafe owner named Flan attempted a murder in the same manner in Paris? Undoubtedly Flan had followed the trial of Tardieu and possibly that of Jerome as well. He saw two weaknesses in their plans. First, the police invariably distrusted isolated burglaries when someone was murdered. Second, Jerome and Tardieu had brought suspicion on themselves by not being at home on that particular night. These were mistakes Flan would avoid. A patient man, he waited until a wave of legitimate burglaries—if I may use that expression—was sweeping his neighborhood. He then killed his wife and burglarized his own apartment. Flan was found bleeding, unconscious and bound hand and foot. He claimed to have been struck from behind by someone he did not see.

"But what made the police suspicious was the fact that all the neighborhood burglaries had certain similarities which marked them as the work of the same burglar—all except the one at Flan's. On closer examination small flakes of paint in the laceration on the top of Flan's head were found to match the paint on a door in the apartment. Does a burglar hit a man over the head with a door? Obviously not. So obviously Flan had tied himself up and then knocked himself out by pitching head first into the door.

"So from Jerome to Tardieu to Flan we come finally to Monsieur Homard. He also reads the newspapers. The burglary idea seems sound, particularly since his wife

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is wealthy and therefore more liable to burglary than most. Jerome, Tardieu, and Flan were fools. But Homard is sure he can learn from their mistakes. First, there would be no reason for the police to doubt that the murder was the work of a burglar operating in the neighborhood. Second, Homard's alibi would be airtight. In this last regard he had an ace in the hole.

"You see, he had known for some time that the bookkeeper at the shoe factory had been embezzling small sums. Homard had kept quiet because he planned to use the information to force the bookkeeper to drain off a sizeable amount of the company's funds with which Homard planned to flee the country. This was before he decided to murder his wife. Now he would use the information to force the bookkeeper to provide him with a perfect alibi for the time of the murder.

"On entering the case I simply asked Homard to account for his movements at the times of the *other* burglaries in the neighborhood. Of course he could not for he had committed them himself. At this point the bookkeeper broke down and told all. Seeing that the jig was up, Homard confessed. It was as simple as that."

"But what's so simple about it?" I insisted. "How did you know to ask Homard about those other nights? His idea of committing the earlier burglaries himself —to set the stage for murdering his wife—sounds pretty original to me."

"Hardly original considering the precedents," said Uncle Lucien. "In fact, if you trace the burglary-murder idea through Jerome, Tardieu, and Flan, the business of the murderer committing the burglaries himself was the next logical step. In fact, I would be surprised if we've seen the last of poor Jerome's idea. If police were given to making predictions, I might even suggest that in the next version the murderer will hit on an alibi which will cover all the burglaries including the one in which he murders his wife. Perhaps an assumed disability of some kind that will leave him apparently bedridden. Perhaps—" Uncle Lucien stopped himself. "But police shouldn't speculate on the future. Rather they should study the past." He raised a finger. "Another dictum from *Kleber on Murder*: the past makes the seemingly unprecedented appear quite commonplace."

Uncle Lucien gave a little smile and ate his after-dinner cigarette.

Naturally whenever my work took me to Strasbourg I stayed with Uncle Lucien in his apartment, which was filled with heavy, elaborately carved, pseudo-medieval furniture of a style jokingly called *Guillaume Deux,* after the

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Kaiser during whose reign it had been popular. The Strasbourgeois laugh over *Guillaume Deux* furniture and at the same time covet it as quite chic. On our after-dinner strolls through the city and along its canals Uncle Lucien became my guide, pointing out a bridge fortified against the Rhine River pirates or a church where Albert Schweitzer had been organist or some detail of the magnificent cathedral that soared above the steep-pitched roofs of the central quarter. Or, if it was summer, we might walk through the Robertsau forest whose tree-lined paths were studded with the massive abandoned bunkers of the Maginot Line. Traditionally we ended our evenings in a cafe.

One night we found ourselves in a cafe with a band—aging musicians in short red jackets whose music had a strong German beer-garden flavor. As usual *Kleber on Murder* in thirty volumes was the topic of conversation. "I hope you understand, my boy, that I intend to include classical references as well. Can one write of the celebrated Brighton murderer who drowned his wives in the bathtub without mentioning the Emperor Nero who provided his mother with a boat that came apart at sea or the Duke of Buckingham who drowned his brother in a cask of malmsey wine?"

We had snails and were daubing bread in the remains of the hot sauce when the clarinetist, a fat little man with a patch of white hair above each ear, stepped to the front of the bandstand and began an Alsatian song in a thin tenor voice. The patrons—they were mostly people in their fifties—became silent. Uncle Lucien himself raised his hand a bit off the table to silence me. I tried to follow the words but my German isn't that good. I've been told since then that the Alsatian dialect is closer to Dutch.

When the applause had died down, Uncle Lucien said, "The song you have just heard is called *Watch on the Volga*. A very sentimental number. The lament of an Alsatian soldier who dreams of home while serving on the Russian Front in 1942. You see, at first Alsace was simply occupied by the Germans. But then we were incorporated into Germany by Hitler's order and they told us that now that we were Germans again, we must serve in the army. So many of us were conscripted."

"And you?" I asked.

"Before I answer that let me ask you a question," said Uncle Lucien. He took one of my cigarettes and held it up. "Have you ever wondered about my little habit?" He ate the cigarette in small bites.

"I've never seen anyone eat cigarettes before," I admitted.

"Remember my dictum that the

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past makes the seemingly unprecedented appear commonplace," said Uncle Lucien. "If you knew our history you would not be surprised one bit by my little habit. As a matter of fact"—he turned his head and scanned the room for a moment—"there," he said, nodding at a table in the corner. I looked just in time to see a man pop the last bite of a cigarette into his mouth. Uncle Lucien waited until he had refilled our glasses with the yellow wine before he continued.

"You see, my boy, for those prepared to run the risk there were two methods to avoid being conscripted into the army. The first, and by far the most popular, called for the eating of a bar of soap just before the medical examination. As you might imagine, this induced violent stomach disorders and a dramatic frothing at the mouth.

"My mother—and perhaps the mother of that gentleman in the corner—was an advocate of the second method. So when my name was called I sat in the dining room and ate my way through two packages of cigarettes with my mother encouraging me to chew each one well while my father filled my wine glass and urged me on when I faltered. I arrived for my medical with palpitations of the heart, a galloping pulse, dizziness, and high blood pressure. Much too sick to be sent to die in Russia. I staggered home a free man and fell into bed. Two weeks later I was up and around again. But I had acquired the habit. Not smoking. I have never smoked a cigarette in my life. I was addicted to eating cigarettes. A mild habit. Perhaps five or six a day.

"So, you see, what you thought was a very strange habit of mine has a very simple explanation. This is why I stress the importance of history for the detective. And not only for the detective. Let me give you an example of that in a moment." He caught the waiter's eye.

"The story I am about to tell you," said Uncle Lucien when the waiter had brought more wine, "takes place during the last war in a large city here in Alsace. The antagonists are the German military governor whom we shall call Major Kessel and the mayor of the city whom we shall call simply the Mayor.

"At first glance all the power was on the side of the occupation army. But the Mayor, with the city bureaucracy behind him, could hinder Kessel's work in a thousand ways. There was also the Armistice Agreement—strongly favoring the Germans, of course, but still something in writing that made Kessel's power less than absolute. The frail little man in the City Hall received the German with correct formality and listened

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politely to all his threats but steadfastly refused, though never in so many words, to go beyond the precise terms of the Armistice. For example, Kessel was responsible for the recruiting of labor battalions to work in German factories. According to the Armistice such battalions had to be made up of volunteers. In this matter of recruitment he had failed to receive the cooperation of the Mayor.

"But then came the day when Hitler signed the order incorporating Alsace and Lorraine into Germany. At last Kessel's power was absolute, a fact he wished to establish beyond any possible doubt. Being a military man, Kessel knew the best way to do this was to start by issuing an impossible order.

"Kessel stormed into the Mayor's office and hurled the dispatch containing the news of the incorporation onto his desk. The Mayor read it, turned slightly pale, but said nothing. 'As of today this is a German city,' shouted Kessel. Et cetera, et cetera. 'You have twenty-four hours to replace all the French street signs with German street signs, Monsieur le Maire. All of them. Twenty-four hours—not one minute more!' And Kessel marched out.

"My boy, I am not sure you realize how impossible this order really was. Take a hard-working Frenchman, put a paint brush in his hand, and he suddenly conceives of himself as a great artist. He becomes temperamental, broods, waits for the muse to move him. And this was a large city, a city of many streets. Major Kessel went to bed that night quite pleased with himself.

"All the next morning he anticipated his meeting with the Mayor. Finally when the deadline was close, he set out for the City Hall. He was a bit surprised to discover that the first few street signs were in German. 'Clever, Monsieur le Maire,' he said to himself. 'But not clever enough. I said *all* the signs, not just those along my route to the City Hall.'

"He ordered his driver to make a detour through the city. At each corner the street signs were in German. He directed his car up and down the tiniest streets and then out to the suburbs. Everywhere his impossible order had been carried out!

"Kessel arrived at the City Hall consumed with curiosity, but unable to demand an explanation. For a military man must take it as the most natural thing in the world when his orders, even the impossible ones, are obeyed. The meeting with the Mayor went badly. They discussed the labor battalions which were no longer to be voluntary. But Kessel, preoccupied with the riddle of the street signs, knew he wasn't being forceful enough. In spite of

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the Mayor's courtliness Kessel suspected there were going to be innumerable difficulties in sending workers across the Rhine.

"Finally, unable to contain himself any longer, Kessel said, 'It occurred to me later, Monsieur le Maire, that perhaps I hadn't given you enough time to carry out my instructions about the street signs. And yet you seem to have succeeded quite well.'

"'Oh,' said the Mayor modestly, 'it wasn't as difficult as that. You see, one of your predecessors gave one of my predecessors that same order back in 1870, though a little more time was allowed to carry it out. In 1918, when the German street signs were replaced with French signs, we simply stored the German ones in the basement of the City Hall.'

"Kessel was impressed. 'How very sensible,' he thought. 'Perhaps these people are Germans after all.'

"But for the rest of the meeting something kept nagging at Kessel until he had to ask a second question. As the Mayor showed him to the door Major Kessel said, 'Just between the two of us, whet have you done with all the French street signs?'

"'Oh,' said the Mayor, 'they are right here, stored in the basement of the City Hall.'"

Uncle Lucien refilled my glass, twisting the carafe elegantly so that the final drop didn't fall on the tablecloth. "Did I mention, by the way, that Jerome the baker's burglary-murder idea has reappeared again? A series of identical burglaries in Grenoble and in the course of one of them a woman was murdered. Her husband heard the prowler and his wife's screams but what could he do? He was confined to bed with a broken hip which he had brought back from a skiing trip. This morning I wired my colleagues in Grenoble suggesting they see if there is really a broken hip beneath the cast." Uncle Lucien stopped. "My little story about the Major and the Mayor bothers you."

Yes, it did. I wanted to ask: "Where are the German street signs now? Again stored in the basement of the City Hall?" But I couldn't. Perhaps I preferred not to know.

Uncle Lucien read my thoughts. He sighed and nodded. "Sometimes I wish this world had more questions that require the imagination of a Laplume to answer," he said. Then he smiled broadly and ate my last cigarette.

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a *NEW* crime story by

MICHAEL GILBERT

Martin Lucas Field, a young geologist prospecting for oil in South America, has an unusual adventure at his campsite on the river Mora. You'll know what we mean by "unusual" when you meet Marciana de Jara and become as involved as Martin in her revolutionary troubles . . . . .

THE CORK IN THE BOTTLE

by MICHAEL GILBERT

MAJOR PATINO, CHIEF OF POLICE of the township and Province of Fernando de la Mora, looked like a contented marmoset. He rode an enormous gray horse, and rode it very well having been, in a manner of speaking, born in the saddle. If he had not, he would have been thrown as the horse reared and bucked in protest at the salvo of fifteen explosions.

Martin Lucas Field came running. He helped to soothe the indignant animal.

"I say," he said, "I do apologize. If I'd seen you coming I'd have postponed the firing."

"It's nothing." Major Patino slid down, handed the reins to one of Martin's mestizo laborers, and looked around him curiously.

"In the town," he said, "it was rumored that you are prospecting for oil. I rode out here expecting to find a huge, an enormous"—he raised one arm up to the sky and grinned— "contraption for drilling. Instead I find you, and three uneducated men, discharging some sort of fireworks."

"It doesn't look very impressive," agreed Martin.

The encampment comprised his own tent on one side of the road, a tent shared by the mestizos on the other, a parked truck, a table standing in the open with apparatus on it, and a tangle of fifteen wires leading out from the table to fifteen black boxes arranged, in groups of five, in a straightish line.

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"You must understand that I'm not a driller," said Martin, "I'm a geologist. I try to discover what lies underneath the crust of your abominable countryside."

"And those little black boxes will tell you?"

"They are geophones. They record the explosions. The sound goes down until it strikes a layer of hard rock. Then it bounces back again. By timing it I can tell just how deep that hard layer lies. When I have made enough soundings I can then plot it. If the layer runs horizontally in a straight line"—Martin held out his brown hand stiffly—"no good. If it runs like this, however"—he bent his hand, with the knuckles sticking upward—"and forms what we call a dome, or cap, it is very hopeful. And if it is not only a dome, but a double dome—we call it a hat, for it looks like this—" He drew with his stick in the dust. "It has the appearance of a hat with the brim turned up on both sides—you see?"

Major Patino stared down at the marks in the dust. His good-natured face was puckered.

"If you find that," he said, "you are certain of oil?"

"Not *absolutely* certain. But very nearly so. The last time a structure like that was found it became the Gran' Cosa Field in Venezuela."

"I hope you discover no caps nor hats," said the Major, "for if you do, the drillers will come. Drilling camps mean trouble—and we have enough trouble here already."

"My boys were trying to tell me something about that when we pitched tents here last night. I don't speak their lingo well enough to make out exactly what the trouble was."

The Major went over and spoke to the nearest of the three mestizos. They were Tupi-Guaranis, half Indian, half Spanish, black-haired, brown-skinned, with pale gray, almost yellow eyes. When they learned that the Major understood their language they grabbed his arm and started to chatter and gesticulate.

"What they say," said the Major, tearing himself away at last, "is that they hold this to be an unhappy place."

"Unhappy?"

"It is difficult to render the meaning exactly—all words in Guarani mean more than one thing. They are so poor, you see, they have to economize even with their language. Roughly, it means a place of ill fortune, a place where bad things can happen."

"Supernatural things?"

"Partly. Not entirely. They say that your camp was watched all last night."

"Watched! By humans, do they mean? I did hear a couple of mountain foxes barking."

"They are not sure if the watchers are of this world or the

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next. Whichever they are, they wish to leave. They would have run off last night, I think, if it had not been their payday tomorrow."

"I'd no notion things were as bad as that. Couldn't you say something to set their minds at rest?"

"But I might find myself agreeing with them," said the Major. "It may be that their instincts are sound. You have indeed pitched your camp in a very odd spot."

"I'm astride the only road leading down to the river. But I'm not blocking it."

"Not actually blocking it. No. But if people wished to come past—at night, shall we say—they would be certain to disturb you. If you didn't hear them your boys would."

"Probably. But who would want to use the road at night? It leads only to the river bank. And there's no crossing place."

"On the contrary, this is the *only* place in forty miles that the river Mora *can* be crossed. That, of course, is why the road exists. Above, there are a succession of rapids. Below, the Mora runs through crumbling ravines. Here, it sweeps in a circle. The banks on either side are flat. The current is not too strong, and a boat, well handled, can cross."

"All right," said Martin, "Let anyone cross who wishes. I'm not stopping them."

"The people who habitually use this road are rough and secretive folk. Contrabandists."

"And I'm not a Customs Officer," said Martin. "So if you should happen to meet any smugglers, please assure them that the path is open."

"Why should you assume," said the Major stiffly, "that I am on speaking terms with criminals? I am a Police Officer. I know my duty—"

It took a cup of tea laced with whiskey to mollify the Major. As dusk approached he remounted his great horse and turned to leave. "I will visit you in the morning," he said. "Sleep soundly."

Martin walked out to inspect the results of the afternoon's shot firing. The nests of geophones covered, altogether, nearly half a mile. Ideally, they should all have been placed at the same level, but in that mountainous country such nicety was impossible, and by the time he had collected the final reading sheet Martin found himself quite far from his camp and above it.

Looking down, he saw exactly what the Major had meant. For people carrying loads, or encumbered with transport, the path formed a bottleneck through which they must pass on their way to the river.

"And I'm the cork in the bottle," he said.

The orange rim of the sun

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touched the saw-edge of the mountains. The indigo blue sky turned to sick pearl, and then to steel-gray. It was very quiet. Martin shivered, and then said to himself, "Someone must have walked over my grave."

Only, this time, he saw the grave. It had been dug in a small flat space surrounded by boulders and was visible only from where he was standing. The freshly excavated red soil was piled in neat heaps at both ends.

Martin made his way back to camp. He was very angry and a little frightened. Using his limited vocabulary of Guarani words he asks his boys which of them had been wasting time doing this unnecessary digging. The mestizos stared at him, their yellow eyes blank. Either they could not or would not understand him, and in the end Martin gave it up. He spoke the word for supper and strode off to his tent, took off his field boots, put on a pair of slippers, and poured himself out a generous whiskey, filling the glass with water from the bottle hanging beside the tent pole.

This was the time of day he liked best—the day's work done, a peaceful hour before supper, an hour to relax, to sip the first drink of the day, to make plans for tomorrow.

What, he thought with a touch of complacency, would an observer see if he chanced to look through the tent opening into this snug and workmanlike interior? He would see a sunburned, tough, self-reliant person, the only white man in five hundred square miles of wild country, the archetypical Anglo-Saxon adventurer. No romantic, however. Simply a man, doing a man's work. Ha!

Even better, he thought, if the admiring gaze through the tent flap should happen to come from the eyes of a girl. An attractive girl, naturally. Not necessarily pretty. Prettiness did not go with the rugged backlands inhabited by men like himself. A girl with close-cropped black hair. Black-haired girls had always appealed to him more than colorless blondes. A girl with a warm face, bronzed by the sun and a mouth ready to smile and show small even teeth. Small breasts—well, not *too small* but, emphatically, not too big. And a nicely rounded bottom and long legs.

(A psychologist, could he have read Martin's thoughts, would have realized that most of his ideas about girls came from magazines and very few of them from life.)

Footsteps on the path outside heralded the arrival of his supper and brought him back to earth. It would be corned beef stew, fresh potatoes, and tinned vegetables.

The flap of the tent opened, and a girl came in.

She had a brown face, black hair, and her mouth, half open

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in an apologetic smile, showed small even teeth.

For a long moment Martin stared at her, saying nothing. Then he scrambled to his feet.

"I'm sorry," he said. "That was very rude of me—"

"It was rude of *me*," said the girl. She spoke the unaccented English of an educated South American. "I should not have come here unannounced. Had the matter not been urgent I should not have done so."

"How *did* you get here?" said Martin. It was the first thing that came into his head. He was still struggling between fantasy and reality.

"On horseback, of course." The girl's half smile broadened. "Did you think I flew down from the sky?"

"To tell you the truth, I didn't know what to think. Won't you sit down please. I heard no horse."

"I left him at the head of the path. There is no grazing here. Thank you."

She took the camp chair he was offering her, and as she lowered herself into it the light coat she was wearing swung open and Martin glimpsed her body.

His first impression was more of strength than of beauty. It was not that she was obtrusively muscled. She looked, he thought, like a big athletic boy whose arms and legs have not yet hardened into manhood but show all the signs of strength to come.

He was aware of a feeling of breathlessness as he walked with deliberate slowness to his own chair and sat down.

"Your business must indeed be urgent," he said, conscious that he sounded stilted, "for you to ride out to a desolate spot like this at this time of night."

(He could see her on a horse, controlling it superbly.)

"It is a matter of life and death." She said it without any hint of dramatic emphasis—as though life and death were kindred spirits, with both of whom she had more than a nodding acquaintance.

"First, I should introduce myself, with a little more formality, I think. I am Marciana de Jara. My father is Doctor Ignacio de Jara. You will have heard of him."

For a moment the name escaped him. Then he remembered. Two journalists talking in a bar down in the capital city.

"He is a politician, isn't he?"

"He was a politician. He was one of the founders of the Partido Democrata Cristiano. For two years now he has been a prisoner at the National Penitentiary at Tacumbu. His crime was to be too successful."

"The General does not welcome competition?"

"Only when it is too weak to succeed. But he will not tolerate an opposition which opposes. At the last so-called free election it

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was arranged that his own party would win eighty seats, the Liberals fifteen, and the Christian Democrats twelve. In fact, so popular had my father become personally, that his party won thirty-three seats."

"How very embarrassing for the General," said Martin. He was not really interested in politics, but he wanted to keep Marciana talking so that he could go on looking at her. "What did he do about it?"

"A recount was demanded in eighteen cases, and curiously enough, sufficient spoiled voting papers were found to reverse the result. Then a month later came the plot."

"Plot?"

"It had nothing to do with my father. I think it was devised entirely by the Security Police. They got hold of two or three tame plotters who were very leniently treated when they confessed."

"Confessed what?" asked Martin, genuinely puzzled.

"Confessed that the true leader of the plot was my father, of course. He was at once arrested and held without trial, under the Law de Defensa de la Democracia. He has been in prison ever since. They have not treated him well."

Martin, who knew something of South American prisons, said nothing.

"For nearly two months they kept him in the stocks, the whole time, with his legs stretched out in front of him. When they let him out he had lost the use of his legs. He could only drag himself along on the ground, using his elbows. When he had recovered a little they put him back in the stocks. This time they beat him, on the soles of the feet. They beat him so hard that many of the bones in his feet were broken."

"Don't talk about it, please, if it troubles you," said Martin.

But there was no weakness in her face—only calm strength and certainty of purpose.

"I am telling you about it," she said, "so that you will understand. A week ago they were moving my father from Tacumbu to a prison in the north. It was because Tacumbu was being visited by an American Civil Rights Committee, I think. We were informed of the move twenty-four hours before it took place. We have good friends."

Certainly she would have good friends.

"We intercepted the car that was taking my father to his new prison. It was not"—she hesitated for a moment over the idiom—"it was not an affair of kid gloves, you understand. Two of our men were wounded, one of them badly. Two of the Police were killed. The driver was wounded and disarmed. But we succeeded in what we had set ourselves to do. My father was brought to a farm, some miles

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from here, by night. He has been hidden there for the past two days. Arrangements had to be made—"

"With the contrabandists?"

Yes, with the contrabandists. You know of them?" Her eyes were like steel blades.

"Major Patino was speaking of them."

"Ah, the fat little local Chief of Police. All the same, he is not such a fool as he looks. What did he say?"

"He said that I was blocking one of their only through routes."

"And what did you say?"

"I told him that I wasn't a Customs Officer."

The girl laughed. "It was a good answer. All the same, things would not have been easy for us. My father cannot walk. He will have to be carried, in a sort of litter, down to the river. It will take four men to do it. There he will be placed in a boat and ferried across. Once in Argentina he will be safe. His friends have transport waiting for him."

"It sounds to me like a piece of cake."

When she looked puzzled he said, "It's a stupid expression we have in England. It means that it should be easy. And if you were afraid that I should try to stop you, then think again. Now that I understand what you are doing, please believe me when I say that you can count on all possible help."

"You are kind, Mr. Field. You see, I found out your name."

"Then you found it out wrong. My name, to my friends, is Martin."

"Thank you, Martin. But you must not help me. You must not become involved in this affair, not in any way, I forbid it." The smile which accompanied these words robbed them of their sting.

She said, "I think you do not quite realize the dangers of what we are doing. You spoke of a piece of cake. We have in this country a cake which is served on the First Day of the year. It is soft and white and delicious." Her little white teeth gleamed. "But in one of the slices there is buried a small hard charm. It is meant to be lucky, but if you are careless you can break your teeth on it."

"I see," said Martin slowly. "And who is going to break our teeth in this case?"

"His name is Colonel Cristobal Ocampos. He is head of the Security Police, and he is a devil."

"Even if he has diabolic powers can he guard all the frontiers in this country?"

"He does not have to. He knows that my father will try to get to Argentina. There are not more than a dozen crossing places for a man who *can* walk. For a man who has to be carried this is the inevitable choice. Also, the car which brought my father here was

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stopped on its way back, and the driver was questioned. His answers were not entirely satisfactory to Colonel Cristobal Ocampos, and he is still being held. No doubt they will torture him. I do not think he will speak quickly, because he is a brave man. But there are things they can do to him—"

"Yes," said Martin uncomfortably, "I suppose even the bravest man—"

She was not listening to him, but to something outside the tent. Martin's words died away into silence.

Her hearing must have been better than his. It was almost a minute before he picked it up—the shuffling of feet, the tiny clink of iron-tipped boots on stone.

One of his mestizo laborers cried out in a harsh, high voice.

"Damned fool," said Martin. "He'll wake everyone for miles."

"Don't go out," said the girl urgently.

"Don't worry about me," said Martin as he flung up the flap of the tent and received a shock. He had been expecting darkness, but it was almost as light as day. While they had been talking, a full moon had swung over the tops of the mountains and was spreading its limelight over the scene.

Up the road, from the direction of the river, came a covered litter, or palanquin. From the careless way the men were carrying it, it was clearly empty.

His three mestizos were huddled in the entrance of their tent. Martin strode across to them.

"Quiet," he said. "All is well, friends."

Three of the four carriers were squat and dark, men of the mountains, with black shaggy hair, thick lips, and dark faces. The fourth was a curious contrast. He was taller by a head than the others, and much thinner, with a head of hair so light-colored that it looked almost silvery in the moonlight. But it was not only these physical differences which caught and held Martin's attention. It was the face, severe, composed, ascetic—a face which took Martin's mind back to the first colonizers, the Jesuit Fathers who had come with the Spanish conquerors.

He was aware that Marciana was standing beside him. He turned and noted the serious look on her face.

She said, "We shall be back in a few hours. No doubt you will hear us. Might I beg of you not to come out?"

"Why?"

"I have told you. You are a stranger to this country. You must not become involved in our affairs."

"I'm involved already," said Martin, "and I should not be afraid to become more so."

"You would not be afraid, no,"

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said the girl. She said it almost sadly. "But I forbid it. And I have the right to forbid it."

The carriers had gone past now, and had reached a bend in the road. In a moment they would be out of sight.

"Very well," said Martin. "But if by any chance you should need it, my offer of help holds good."

The girl held out her hand, in the English fashion, for him to shake. Martin raised the warm brown hand to his lips and kissed the back of it. The girl turned and walked off up the path. Martin stood, his mouth dry, his heart beating double time. Would she turn around?

As she reached the bend in the road she seemed to hesitate. Please turn, said Martin to himself. Please turn, once more.

The next moment she was gone. Martin swung on his heel and went back into his tent.

When the mestizo cook brought his dinner, Martin looked at him without seeing him, ate the food without being conscious of what it was, sat back in his chair, put his after-dinner cigarillo into his mouth and forgot, for fifteen minutes, to light it.

One thing was clear. He had no hope of sleep that night. He looked at his watch. It was eleven o'clock. His eye fell on the neat pile of seismographic records—sixty of them, the results of four successive firings. He would have to tabulate them some time, and draw the graph which would demonstrate the shape of the hidden strata. It was a finicking piece of drudgery which he usually left to the draftsmen at the base office, but this time he thought he would try his hand at it. It would occupy his mind to the exclusion of thoughts that were far more disturbing.

Two hours later, his head swimming, his eyes bleared with the strain of working in a poor light, he was staring down at the result.

The stratum sloping gently downward had apparently cracked, turning up for a short way, then down again, then up in a perfectly shaped dome, or cap rock. The far side lay beyond his survey, but the general shape was beautifully clear. It would have to be surveyed again, across several different axes, but Martin had no doubt at all that he was looking at the most promising drilling prospect that he had seen in twenty years of search.

It was at this moment that he heard the men coming back. He jumped up, switched off the single electric bulb, and stole across in the darkness to the opening of his tent.

The moon had swung over, and was throwing long shadows among the rocks, and out of a pool of shadow came the palanquin, more slowly now as the carriers took the strains of its loaded weight.

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There were still four of them. Three were the dark mountaineers, but the fourth was now no longer the tall thin light-haired man. It was Marciana.

Martin held his breath. He said, "If this is the last time I see her it is the most perfect. Young, strong, brave, in the moonlight. A daughter helping to carry her father out of hell and into heaven."

The next moment they had turned with the road and were gone. He could still hear the soft chink of metal on stone, frequently at first, then less often, as they went farther away, and then not at all. Only the far-off sound of a night bird, the whisper of bats' wings, and the silent stars.

One of the few Guarani words that Martin knew was *pyghare,* which meant night. It also meant infinity. As he stood there, straining his ears for a whisper from the river in the valley below, Martin understood this. Day was finite, but night was infinite.

The first shot sounded like a desecration, as if someone had screamed in Church. A ragged volley followed. Without thinking what he was doing, Martin started to run.

It was a miracle that he did not break a leg. Half a dozen times he stumbled in his headlong descent, saving himself at the last moment. There were men not far ahead of him, shouting; and there was a light, stronger than the moon, a blue-white blaze of incandescence that could only be a searchlight.

As he reached the last corner Martin halted.

The light was focused on the bank and on the slow, brown stream of the Mora. The palanquin lay on its side, half in, half out of the water. A few yards out from the bank an upturned boat swung round in a slow eddy. There was no sign of the carriers.

A line of lights was moving away from the bank, downstream, a steady, purposeful advance. The men who held the lights were sweeping the ground like hunters who are confident they have their quarry cornered.

A flurry of motion. A figure sprang up from the rocks near the river bank and started to run, uphill, toward him. Martin saw two things in consecutive heartbeats. The first was that it was the girl who was being hunted. The second, that there was a man with a rifle crouched behind a rock not five yards below him.

Martin heard the bolt of the rifle click as he jumped. Then he was kneeling on top of the rifleman.

The man had time to give one choked scream. Martin had him by the hair and had banged his head once on the rock when something hit him on the back of the skull—then everything was blotted out in a whirl of fire and

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blazing pain and darkness...

When consciousness returned it was not a sudden process but a succession of slow advances and lapses, like the waves breaking on the sand, each one crawling a little higher, lasting a little longer, before it sank back into the dark sea. And each sense as it returned built up a total of awareness and memory and pain.

His first retained impression was the smell of a cigar. Curious to see who could be smoking, he turned his head and opened his eyes. A stabbing pain forced him to close them again.

Minutes, hours, years later he heard a voice speaking in Spanish. A hand grasped his chin and jerked his mouth open, something hard was thrust in, and a burning jet of raw spirit ran down his throat. The next minute he was being sick, rolling on the ground, vomiting his heart up.

The voice said something else. Hands picked him up again and propped him in a chair.

He opened his eyes and with a conscious effort held them open. He was in his own tent, but there were things about it that were wrong. It seemed that no fewer than four lights now hung from the ridge pole. It was difficult to count them properly because of the curtain of gray smoke which hung between him and them.

Slowly the smoke cleared, and as it did so, the four lights swung together into two, and the two into one. As eyes and mind focused, movement came back. His head was throbbing, an intolerable pulse which kept time with his heart. But he could see and hear now. And understand. And remember.

The man who had spoken, and whose obese body occupied the other flimsy camp chair to the point of protest and disintegration, was a middle-aged Spanish dandy. The black hair was oiled and curled with a nicety which suggested a wig. The nails of the pudgy hand which held the cigar were manicured and tinted, and the creature had sprinkled on itself a scent so assertive that it almost vanquished the smell of the cigar.

He said, "You must allow me to introduce myself. My name is Ocampos of the Security Police. I would offer you one of my cigars, Mr. Field, but it appears to me that your stomach"—the Colonel lowered his heavy lids for a moment toward the soiled floor—"is in too delicate a condition to appreciate it."

"What's happened?" said Martin. His voice came out in a dry croak.

"You were stupid enough, although I acquit you of any great malice in the heat of the moment—nevertheless, it was a stupidity—to attack one of my men. Fortunately Sergeant Rovera has a hard head, otherwise you might have found yourself in a

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very difficult situation indeed. As it was, you got a crack on the head yourself, which might be described as poetic justice."

There was a question which Martin wanted to ask but which he dared not ask, for fear of the answer. The Colonel took a pull at his cigar, held the smoke for a moment in his pursed cheeks, and then exhaled it. He knew, too, what Martin ached to know, and he had no intention of helping him.

"What," said Martin, controlling his voice with an effort, "what happened to the men?"

"They took to the river. These Argentinos swim like fish. One was almost certainly killed. His body was observed to go under. Two reached the other bank. One, I think, was wounded."

"And the old man?"

"The old man," said Colonel Ocampos thoughtfully.

"Dr. Ignacio de Jara."

The Colonel appeared to hesitate. Then he said, "Ah, yes," as if something previously obscure had suddenly become comprehensible to him. "Dr. Ignacio is—unharmed."

"Unharmed," said Martin. "Crippled by your torturers!" Fear and uncertainty were working on him.

The Colonel said, "Crippled. I see. By the brutality of his jailers, or of the Police, I suppose?"

A tiny smile appeared for a fleeting moment at the corners of his mouth—appeared and was gone.

Then there was the question that had to be asked. "And the girl?" Martin said.

"The girl, I fear, is dead."

Martin fought against understanding. It was not true! It could not be true! The man was a sadist. He had said it deliberately. He had said it to get pleasure out of Martin's pain.

"She was killed," said the Colonel, "by a burst from a machine pistol, at medium range. Two, at least, of the bullets hit her in the head. Others—in the body."

Martin stared at him. His mouth was thick with bile.

"I see that I do not entirely convince you. Unfortunately the plainest method of proof is no longer open to me."

"What do you mean?" Martin whispered.

"I cannot ask you to inspect the body for yourself. It has already been buried."

"Buried?"

"My men found an open grave. Normally I should have had to take the body back with me to headquarters, but as I had business here first, it would not have been convenient."

"Business?" said Martin. "More torturing, more killing?"

The Colonel looked at him calmly. "Much can be forgiven," he said, "to a man who has had a knock on the head." He pulled

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again at his cigar, which was now drawing nicely. "No. Not killing. Just watching. There is a very dangerous man who *must* be prevented from crossing. His name, which is Rafael Asilvera, would mean nothing to you. No?"

Martin shook his head.

"In case you should encounter him you will please inform the Police at once. You will recognize him easily. He is very tall, very thin, and has remarkably light hair, almost white."

"Oh, him," said Martin. "He went up with the empty litter earlier this evening."

At one moment Colonel Ocampos was lying back in his chair. The next, with a spasm of energy incredible in one so fat, he was on his feet, standing over Martin.

"What!" he shouted. "Here already? When? Where? Why was I not told?" His face, a few inches from Martin, was engorged with anger. He raised a fat hand, heavy with rings, and smacked Martin on the side of the face.

Martin tried to get up, but the effort started an engine in his head, accelerating, racing at dizzying speed. As the mist thickened and blackness folded over him he heard the Colonel shouting for his Sergeant...

When he woke up he was in his own camp bed, with a bandage round his head. The pain had retreated into a dull ache at the back of his skull, and his cheek still burned where the Colonel's ring had cut it. But he was himself again. He swung his legs off the bed, got cautiously to his feet, and tottered across to the tent opening.

The mestizos were boiling water over a fire of thorn, and grinned cheerfully at him when they saw him. They seemed to have recovered from their apprehensions of the night before. Martin said the word for coffee, then moved back to sit down at his table. The geophone sheets were still there, and the calculations and the graphs he had drawn the night before.

One night before? A lifetime before.

He folded them up and crammed them into the pocket of his jacket, where they made a solid bulge.

After breakfast he walked, very slowly, up the hill to where he had found the grave. It was a supreme effort and he had to sit down twice on the way.

When he got there he sat down on a rock, in the shade.

The grave had been filled. Someone had even spared the time to place a cross at the head of it, two flat pieces of wood which looked as if they had come from a packing case, lashed together with cord. On the crosspiece, in pencil, in Spanish characters was written *Marciana de Jara,* followed by the date. Nothing more.

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Martin sat there for a long time. It was the sun moving over the edge of the rock and beating down on his head which finally forced him to move.

First, he took the slab of papers out of his jacket pocket and tore them, slowly, into small pieces. He was tearing up £100,000,000. Maybe £1,000,000,000. Maybe even more. But it was money which would go to the country which had murdered the girl, money which would go to the country of Colonel Ocampos.

Martin grinned crookedly to himself as he got out his lighter, set fire to the tattered pile of paper scraps, and sat back on his heels to watch them burn.

When they were a pile of gray and black ashes he scooped a hole in the loose earth on top of the grave, buried the ashes in it, and covered them again with the earth.

"Money for your journey," he said to Marciana.

The massacre in the Plaza Talavera was not reported in the papers as a massacre, but as an untoward incident.

It occurred when the General was opening the new Farmers Cooperative Building. The car, flying the pennant of State, drew to a halt. The band struck up the National Anthem, the Guard of Honor presented arms, and a figure in General's uniform stepped from the car.

Two shots were fired from a first-story window on the other side of the square, and both hit their target. As the figure in General's uniform swung round and crumpled, someone shouted, "There! There he is. He is running."

Certainly a man was running. Several men were running. Women and children too. The machine pistols of the guards opened up.

The casualties were four men, one woman, and two children killed. Another four men, two women, and one child were seriously injured. Forty people sustained less serious injuries. None of this affected the assassin. It was plain-clothes policemen stationed at the rear of the building who caught him emerging and cut him to pieces with their carbines.

It later developed that the original victim, whose killing had triggered off the massacre, was not the General at all, but one of his aides. The General, who had been traveling in the second car, without a pennant, was unhurt, and later completed the opening ceremony.

On the morning after the shooting Martin was summoned to the Seguridad Building in the Avenue Diaz. He went to that place of evil reputation with a fairly easy conscience. It was six months since the episode on the river Mora, and since then he had led a quiet life, working mostly in the Company office and spending very little

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time on location.

He gave his name to the sergeant on duty in the reception hall and after some telephoning he was conducted along dim corridors and down uncarpeted steps.

"What happens down here?" he asked. His guide seemed not to understand him.

They stopped at last outside a heavy door with no handle but with a small window of glass set in the center. His guide peered through it for a moment, then he put his shoulder to it and it swung heavily open.

He motioned to Martin to enter.

The room was a large one, lit by unwinking fluorescent light. On six slabs lay six bodies, all naked, and all with signs on them of the violence that had killed them.

Colonel Cristobal Ocampos was standing in the middle of the room. He looked up as Martin came in.

"Over here, Mr. Field."

The body lying on the slab was long and thin. The parts which had not been smashed by the bullets looked sunburned and healthy. The hair was light, almost white. The face, which was unmarked, was still serene.

"Do you recognize him?"

"Yes." Martin knew that he was going to be sick. It was not the sights. It was the smell—warm, sweet, fetid, heavy with corruption.

"You're sure you recognize him?"

"Certain. Can I go, please?"

The Colonel said, "You shall come with me to my office."

By the time they got there Martin had recovered a little. He said, "Were those others the people who were killed in the Plaza yesterday?"

"Some of them," said the Colonel. He had got a cigar out and was waving a lighted match carefully under the end of it.

"And the long thin man?"

"He was the assassin. Yes. The man who tried to shoot the General and succeeded only in killing poor Major Villansanti. You did recognize him?"

"I saw him only once, and only for a few seconds, by moonlight, six months ago. But I could not be mistaken. It is a remarkable face. You told me his name but I have forgotten it."

"Rafael Asilvera." Colonel Ocampos intoned the name slowly. It sounded like a private prayer. "He was a most remarkable man. A professional assassin. A perfect shot with any weapon. He could also use a knife and he could kill with his hands. He was the man who shot President Perez at the iron mines, up at Tequila, and escaped. He placed the bomb which destroyed Pedro Gimenez in Brazilia two years ago. He cut the throat of Dr. Alvarenga, the man they called the 'physician of death.' He cut it with the doctor's own lancet, in his own surgery,

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and left the house undetected. He was the man who wounded, and nearly killed, our General's predecessor."

"And he came here, into this country, with the object of killing the General?"

"That was his next commission. Six months he lay here in hiding. I told you he was a professional. But we have learned to be professionals, too, Mr. Field. From the moment we knew that he had escaped our net and was inside the country, the General was placed under a special routine. No announcements were made of his public engagements. If he attended a banquet, every guest and every waiter was screened. The platform from which he normally spoke to the Assembly was moved, so that no window commanded it. When he traveled abroad, one of his aides traveled in the official car. He himself traveled in the second or third car. It was a game of cat and mouse. In the end we allowed the news to leak out to Asilvera's employers that the General would be opening the Cooperative Building. We guessed that Asilvera would use a rifle. It is his favorite weapon. We had our men *behind* every building in the Square."

"And eight people died?"

"Agreed," said the Colonel. "And if you had told me ten minutes earlier, on that occasion six months ago, that you had seen Asilvera, we should have caught him then and no one would have died—except Asilvera,"

"So the whole thing's my fault?"

"We must be fair," said the Colonel. "You were under strain." He looked approvingly at the end of his cigar. "I have often wondered if you had the least idea of what was going on that night. Have you ever considered, for instance, who dug that grave, and for whom?"

"No."

"Then I will tell you. It was dug by the contrabandists, under the orders of the lady who now lies buried in it. And it was dug, Mr. Field, for *you*."

Martin stared at him.

The Colonel said, "You were an unforeseen, last-minute obstruction to a very carefully worked-out plan. Let me explain. Our frontiers are, for the most part, easy to watch, particularly for such a remarkable, unforgettable man as Rafael Asilvera. The operation of smuggling him in needed meticulous planning and timing. It was arranged with the contrabandists. They knew the risks. They stipulated payment in minted silver dollars, with six crates of the best scotch whiskey thrown in for good measure.

"Their part was to ferry Asilvera across the Mora and conduct him to a car waiting on the hill road. The empty palanquin they brought with them was to carry their

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reward back in. At the last moment, when all was ready, what happens? A suspicious-looking foreigner places his tents across the very path they are going to use. Well, they are simple men. They thought of a simple remedy. Cut his throat and bury him. His mestizos will run away, too terrified to speak. Your equipment would have been rolled down into the river. No one had seen you arrive. So no one would raise an alarm if you disappeared. Or not until it was much too late for the mystery to be solved. It was a very practical solution."

"Why didn't they do it?"

"Ah, that was Major Patino. He is a clever little man. He had got wind that something was afoot. He rode over quite openly, to your camp. His actions announced to all concerned that he knew you were there. That saved your life. So another scheme had to be thought of. If you could not be killed, you might be bought."

"Bought?"

"Not all purchases, Mr. Field, are made with money. Some are made by the employment of imagination. By the use of the magic that lies behind a woman's eyes."

"Do you mean to tell me that her story—the whole thing—was made up?"

"Since I was not privileged to be there, I do not know precisely what story she told you. But certain things you said suggested parts of it. Doctor Ignacio de Jara, for instance, is not her father, and was in moderately good health when I spoke to him last. Nor has any attempt, successful or otherwise, been made to rescue him."

Martin was still thinking about the girl. He said, "Who was she?"

"Her name was Marciana Santacruz. She was of the revolutionary party, and high in its councils. If, as I imagine, she painted you a moving picture of the sufferings of the aged Doctor Ignacio in prison, she would be well equipped to do so. She has been in prison three times herself—on the first occasion at the age of fifteen."

"If this is true," said Martin slowly, "if everything you are telling me is fact, and every word she spoke was a lie, you still had no right to shoot her. Asilvera was already in the country. It was too late to stop that."

"But we did not know it. We imagined that what was going down to the river was a reception committee."

"But to shoot! Without stopping to question. In cold blood. It was—" Martin stumbled for words. In the end he said lamely, "It was completely unjustified."

"Since you have pronounced it unjustified," said the Colonel, "I will not attempt to justify it. I will say only this. The General

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has ruled us now for nearly twenty years. His rule does not appeal to everyone. But it is a great deal better than anarchy. While he rules it is my job to keep him alive. In a country like England, where you have had political stability for hundreds of years, you may tend to undervalue it. You had your Civil War. A gentlemanly affair of Roundheads and Cavaliers. I have read of it. But have *you* heard of the War of the Triple Alliance, which ravaged this country not so long ago? I thought not. It is not included in your history books.

"Let me tell you a single fact. At the start of the war the population of our country was more than half a million. At the finish it was less than a quarter of a million. And of those left alive, only twenty-eight thousand were men. That is what anarchy and civil war mean in a country like this. That is why many people are in prison today who would not have been imprisoned in your country, and why people have been killed who might still be alive. And if the same situation arose again tomorrow, I would act in the same way."

The Colonel knocked the ash off his cigar and added, "That is enough of lecturing. Goodbye, Mr. Field."

It was not until a long time afterward that it dawned on Martin Lucas Field that he had met a remarkable man.

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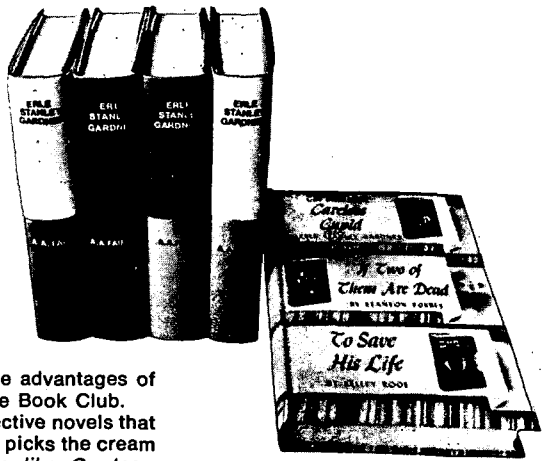

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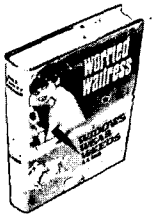

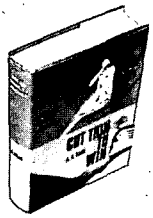

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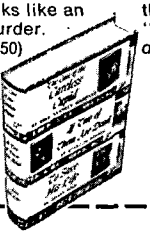

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